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CAMPAIGN 1870 = 71  
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OPERATIONS  
OF THE  
NORTH GERMAN TROOPS  
IN  
LORRAINE & PICARDY.  
—  
SETON.









NOTES ON THE  
OPERATIONS  
OF THE  
NORTH GERMAN TROOPS.



NOTES  
ON THE  
OPERATIONS  
OF THE  
NORTH GERMAN TROOPS,  
IN  
LORRAINE AND PICARDY;  
TAKEN WHILE ACCOMPANYING PRINCIPALLY THE  
40TH, OR HOHENZOLLERN FUSILIER REGIMENT.  
BY  
J. L. SETON,  
YR. OF PITMEDDEN,  
LATE CAPTAIN 102D ROYAL MADRAS FUSILIERS.



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1872.

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## PREFACE.

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THE following narrative of portions of the operations of the late war, comes out rather late in the day to be of much interest to general readers, who have perhaps been tired out by reading the descriptions of correspondents and sight-seers.

Neither can I pretend to rank the work amongst symmetrical histories, even of parts of the great campaign, for it is in this way lopsided, that what may be called the centre of the narrative consists of my notes and recollections, surrounded by accounts more or less in detail, which I have gathered from reliable sources.

The compilation has been delayed by two attacks of severe illness, which compelled me to leave off working for some time, and by the constant desire after acquiring some information to obtain still more. I believe, however, that no work, containing so much accurate information as to details of the mobilisation, concentration, and first operations on the Prussian frontier, has yet appeared either in the German or English language. Those who have read and been interested in some French accounts, particularly that of General Faidherbe, will, I hope, compare my statements as to facts with some of his.

It will be observed that I have to plead guilty to having committed, under strong temptation, an offence against military discipline. If, as I hope it may do, this narrative proves the means of conveying to my former comrades some of the practical lessons—more especially as regards tactics and organization of troops—taught by the late war, I shall feel relieved of much of the soreness attending the reflection that the last important act of my military career was receiving a severe reprimand.

I have to express the deep obligations I have incurred towards the Prussian General who allowed me to witness the operations of his troops, to the Commanders and to the Staff generally of his Army Corps, to the regiments, whose Officers treated me as a comrade, and to many others from whom I have received acts of kindness. They will, I trust, look on any criticisms I attempt as dictated by an honest desire to make known the thoughts which their performances gave rise to in my mind.

The sketches of the country operated in by the troops I accompanied, may save the reader the trouble of constantly referring to a more perfect Map, but will be of greater use as a mere aid to finding on the latter, the places mentioned in the narrative. The author has uniformly made use of Reymann's map, both when in the field and when comparing various accounts.

J. L. SETON,

*Late Captain*

102nd Royal Madras Fusiliers.

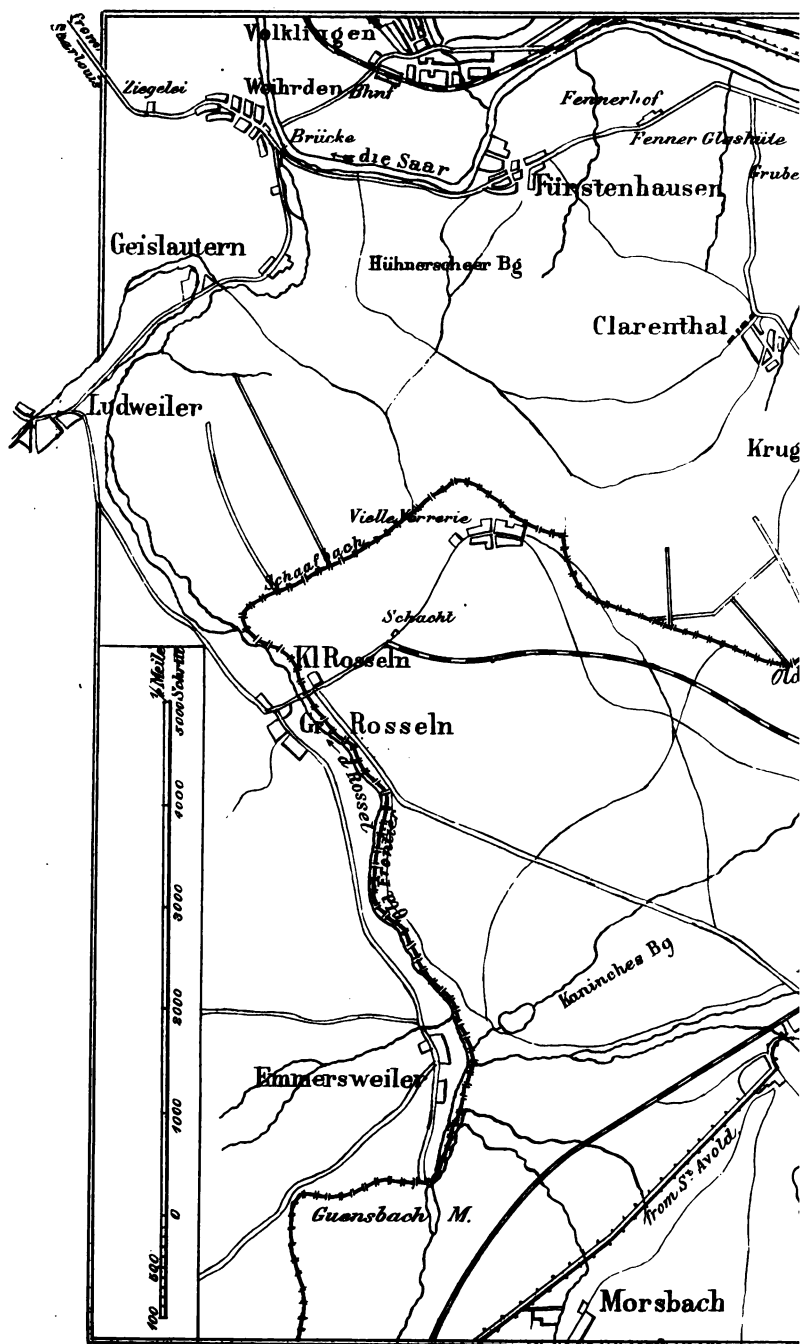
*24th February, 1872.*







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*Glossary: Bach - Brook; Brücke - Bridge; Bahnhof - Railw*

## CHAPTER I.

### PARATIONS THROUGHOUT RHENISH PRUSSIA ON THE MOBILISATION BEING ORDERED.

OUT Midsummer, 1870, I happened to have gone  
ad with the view of, amongst other things, witness-  
the summer manœuvres of the French force at  
lons, and afterwards, should I be able to remain  
er absent from England, of accompanying the move-  
its of whatever North German troops might in  
western provinces assemble for exercise in the  
umn. That it was not the intention of the Prussian  
ernment to concentrate any large force of the latter  
d been informed. The above-mentioned camp I had  
ed, had had an interview with, I believe, General  
sard, who received me very civilly and promised  
if I would return a month later, furnished  
an introduction from the Minister of War, I  
ld be afforded every facility for watching the  
œuvres including the use of a horse on grand  
l-days.

was awaiting the answer to an application I had  
e for extension of leave—also a communication from  
Military Attaché to our Paris Embassy, who had  
so kind as to promise me his help towards obtain-  
the introduction above alluded to—and was staying  
Kreuznach on the Nahe, when the demands of the  
ch Government on that of Prussia first became

known. It may be well supposed that at a place distant only about 50 miles from the frontier, lying also on a straight line drawn from Metz to Mainz, as well as on the most direct route from Châlons to the Middle Rhine, great excitement must have been caused by any rumour of a speedy breaking out of war with France. Yet there was an absence of expression of any emotion by inhabitants or visitors, which greatly surprised me. From the latter class, however, must be excepted we of the British nation, for none seemed so eager for fresh news, none so ready to discuss the chances of the pending dispute ending in war, none so prepared with plans of campaign for either possible belligerent, than some of us who met daily at dinner or in the news-room. Probably our neighbours belonging to the countries most concerned, while they certainly said less, thought the more.

The 15th July was the date up to which this apparent tranquility lasted. On the day previous two of us made a trip to Ems, where we found we were just a few hours too late for a sight of either the King or the Ambassador, both having left the place that morning. We much regretted not having paid our visit to the watering place on the day immediately before, when we might have witnessed the scene of history in which His Prussian Majesty and M. Benedetti were actors; but, from what I have since heard, I believe that little took place on the promenade of a dramatic character, or calculated to attract the attention of passers by. The same absence of excitement as at Kreuznach, was to be observed at this bathing-place, and on the journey; everything in the way of business and pleasure seemed to be going on as usual; the gaming tables well attended; little or no discussion as to the chances of war or continued peace to be heard on the walks, in the railway carriages, or on the steamer; no shouts of feeling one way or another in the streets more frequented by the lower classes.

On the 16th there was a change. From early in the morning the visitors were to be seen crowding to the railway station in such numbers that the ordinary accommodation on the passing trains soon proved unequal

to the demand. The signal for this exodus appeared to be an Extra of the *Cologne Gazette*, posted up in all the most conspicuous places, and containing the gist of M. Ollivier's statement of the 15th to the Legislative Body, together with a postscript of the newspaper's own to the effect that war had been declared. Most of the English and Americans still stood fast. But few of the French and Russian families were to be seen at the close of the day. Still the expressions both of countenance and language to be noted amongst the inhabitants both of the new and old towns, shewed little more than regret at the departure of the visitors who furnished the main source of livelihood to at least the former.

The same day we knew that the order from Berlin for the mobilisation of the army had been received. Throughout the day, to the surprise of us uninitiated ones, who could not forbear expressing our wonder that reinforcements were not pushed up to the frontier as rapidly as possible, trains were seen passing up the line from Bingerbrück empty. Here should be remarked that in all theories enunciated amongst us as to the probable lines of operation in case of war actually breaking out, the question was invariably begged that the French would make a dash at the Rhine before the German army could be mobilised and concentrated, and that at least the Châlons force was quite ready to take the field. Next day the trains commenced returning filled with unarmed men in their ordinary clothes.

My knowledge of the North German military system was at that time very crude, confined to being aware of the obligation binding every subject fit to bear arms, of the States composing the Confederation, to Military service, at first in the line, subsequently in the Landwehr, and to the having observed that at the several entrances of each town and village were boards stuck on the walls bearing in addition to their names and those of the districts and circles to which they respectively belonged, also the numbers of the Landwehr regiments and battalions which their service men composed, with the names of the towns where the head-quarters of the latter lay. Imagining that the men's arms, equip-

ments, and clothing were with them, as was the case with our Volunteers, or at least kept in store at the places where they lived, I was in expectation of seeing the Landwehr at once mustered and pushed to the frontier, while regiments from more distant districts and garrisons gradually arrived in support. Consequently, throughout the two days I was perplexed at seeing none but unarmed men pass through, and all, as I was told, on the way to Coblenz, and though my former service as a policeman ought to have qualified me for picking up information, I failed to get any satisfactory explanation of the movements going on. All I could learn was from personal observation that the men passing by made no outward display of war-like enthusiasm. At the time it did not strike me that these men were in obedience to orders abandoning their homes to the mercy of an immediately expected invader, nor did I know that traditions of former occupations by the French of the Rhine Province and the Palatinate from the time of Louis XIV, to that of Napoleon, lived so strongly amongst the peasantry, and that the fear of what might be coming was greatly increased by the reports that Mahomedan savages from Algiers were to lead the advance on the Rhine.

During a renewed residence since the war on either bank of that river, I have been enabled by the kindness of different officers of the army, and friends made during the campaign, and of other gentlemen, to offer some details as to the mobilisation of the troops in the Rhenish Province, and their subsequent movement to the frontier; which probably have not been correctly described ere this. Still almost every one who has at all studied the late campaign must be aware that the various "Army Corps" which took part therein came each from a particular province or State of Germany, which during peace it garrisoned, and from which it recruited, or—to write more correctly—in which its organization, from Commanding-General down to Regimental Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers, was used to train the manhood thereof for possible Military Service. Most students also know that such part of the population of Rhenish

Prussia (exclusive of the Circles of Düsseldorf and Wetzlar) as is serving or liable to service in either Line or Landwehr—with the exception of the picked men belonging to the Guard Corps, which recruits throughout the whole of Prussia—composes the 8th Army Corps, the head-quarters of which are at Coblenz. The garrisons lying along the frontier of Prussia towards Lorraine, Luxemburg, and Belgium from Bavaria northwards, are furnished therefore by this corps. Of the two <sup>1</sup>Divisions into which the infantry of every corps is divided, the 15th draws men in and garrisons the northern part of the province, with head-quarters at Cologne; the 16th has the military care of the southern part with head-quarters at Trèves. With each Division are the Commander and staff of a Cavalry Brigade. The Landwehr Battalion—*i.e.*, District-Commanders,—have on their registers the names not only of all men belonging to their battalions, but also of all men of any arm still liable to service, who reside in their districts. Every such man on shifting his abode presents his “small account book” to the District Commander, who, if the man belongs to the Reserve, reports to his regiment the change of residence. It is the normal duty of a District-Commander on a mobilisation being decreed, to issue the necessary orders to all these men, directing them to appear at his head-quarters on a certain day, and he receives the assistance of the civil authorities for carrying out the distribution of these orders. The men on joining, if not belonging as Landwehr men to his battalion, he despatches as quickly as possible to the *depôt*-battalions, squadrons, etc., of their regiments, where their clothing, equipment, and arming are carried out. If, at the time, I had known this, I should have gone across to Simmern,

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<sup>1</sup> The number of an Infantry Division in the N.G. Army is always, if even, the 2nd multiple of that of the Army Corps; if uneven, to know the Corps the following even number must be halved. Likewise with Brigades—to know the Division any one of them belongs to, the same operation of mental arithmetic must be gone through. The number of every Infantry Brigade must therefore be the 4th multiple of that of the Corps, or one of the three numbers immediately preceding that multiple. This symmetrical rule does not extend down to regiments.



the district Landwehr head-quarters, and have seen at least the first day's muster. Since the war with Austria much attention, I believe, had been paid to the subject of accelerating the distribution of these orders, in order not only to get the war-preparation more quickly carried out, but also to allow the levies as much spare time as possible for arranging their family affairs. Thus in the Rhine Province, a notice, signed by both civil and military authorities, had previously appeared to the effect that there should be no need whatever to make any difference in respect of the duty of men punctually to answer the levy in case of mobilisation, or in case the same were not fulfilled, as regards liability to punishment, whether a written order directing a man to turn out should be handed to him, or a merely verbal notice should reach him from his civil or military official, or in fine only a general order issued by the superior civil and military officials calling out the class of his age, or the levy to which he belongs, should come to his knowledge in any way.

The Commanding-General seems afterwards to have addressed the Head of the Civil Government, pointing out that different modes of communicating the Mobilisation orders had been observed in different districts; he desired to aim at no uniformity, which the varying circumstances of each district might render inadvisable, but intimated his wish that the Landrath or chief civil authority of each district should afford aid to the Landwehr Commander of the same, and his intention to instruct all of the latter to arrange with the authorities of their respective districts, the details necessary towards carrying out the work in the shortest way. This communication was passed on by the head of the Civil Government to the Landrath of each district, and by the latter to the Burgomaster of each township. The District Commanders then seem to have submitted to the Landrathen the plans they respectively conceived to be the most expeditious for distributing the levy orders from their offices amongst the men, with the request that concurrence or grounds of objection should be communicated. In this pleasant way of conducting

official business, and in the absence of undue interference on the part of central authority, it seemed to have been arranged in one particular district on the right bank of the Rhine, that, immediately on the arrival of the mobilisation order at district headquarters, the same, naming also the first day of mobilisation, should be telegraphed or otherwise forwarded as quickly as possible to the Burgomasters. That at 9 a.m., of the second mobilisation day, there should be present at the Landwehr office the number of messengers required to carry the collective orders to each Burgomaster, who also was to have in waiting at his office the number of messengers necessary to carry out the distribution to the men themselves, within the space of six hours. Each messenger to carry in addition to the orders, a roll in which each recipient (or relation empowered to receive such order) should sign an acknowledgment that the same had reached him. All failures in distributions to be at once reported by the Burgomasters. Thus I believe that in one particular township in that district, the mobilisation order for the late war was received by the Burgomaster telegraphically on the 16th; the written orders for individuals about 2 p.m. on the 17th; that his messengers were in waiting from noon, and that by 6 p.m. the distribution had been completed. Most of the men had not to appear at Landwehr headquarters till the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, obtaining in this way at least four days for settling their home affairs.

So much for the mobilisation of such parts of the Army Corps as lie on the right bank of the Rhine; also was the measure carried out probably in the same way throughout the interior of North Germany. But as regards the left bank of the great river, thought had to be taken whether, considering the large French forces believed to be in readiness at Châlons and at Metz, it would be possible to carry out the mobilisation according to rule of the troops lying on or near the frontier. As early as the 12th, the General commanding the 8th Army Corps (then Herwarth von Bittenfeld, now Field Marshal) sent orders to the Commander of the 16th Division at Trèves, which were to

provide for possible emergencies. To the discretion of the latter officer at the same time was left the carrying out of the orders at what time he might think fit, he being in the best position to judge of passing events. On the frontier at the time were the following garrisons:—7th Lancers and Fusilier Battalion of the 69th Regiment at Saarbrücken; in the fortress Saarlouis, besides Artillery, the 70th Regiment and two squadrons of the 7th Lancers; at Divisional head-quarters, the 9th Hussars, the 40th Regiment with some Artillery, also two battalions of the 69th Regiment there or in its neighbourhood. Along the line were also four district or Landwehr head-quarters, which according to the instructions sent as above, were to be moved for mobilisation as follows:—two from Trèves to Neuwied, one from Saarlouis to Engers, one from St. Wendel to Bendorf. The dépôts of the named line regiments to be formed: of the 7th Lancers at Siegburg, of the 9th Hussars at Neuwied, of the 40th Regiment at Neuen-dorf, near Coblenz, of the 69th at Andernach, and of the 70th at Engers. Reports received on the 16th as to a probable advance of the French through Luxemburg and Belgium caused similar instructions to be sent to the Commander of the 15th Division with reference to his troops lying along the frontier, naming new mobilising places to be used in case of emergency, analogously to those assigned to the 16th. The same evening, however, better news came in, more especially reliable intelligence that some of the Belgian railways had been broken up, which induced the Commanding General to order the mobilisation of the 15th Division to be carried on in the ordinary way. In the district embracing Kreuznach, the head-quarters of which I have said to be at Simmern on the Hunsrück, the men received their orders on the 17th to present themselves at the latter town; guards, cavalry, and artillery on the 21st; men of other regiments on the 22nd, and Landwehr on the 23rd. By way of illustration, an informant of mine, now living in the neighbourhood of Kreuznach, who had served as a “one-year volunteer” in the 80th (Hessian Fusilier) Regiment up to April, 1869, and had then chosen the 40th, in

which to pass his reserve time, received his orders and appeared at district head-quarters on the days I have named for the infantry respectively. The roll was called of each regiment, there being about 100 of his present. These were temporarily organized under non-commissioned officers (the necessary lance promotions being made), billeted for the night, marched next day to Bacharach and thence transported by rail to Coblenz for Neundorf. The railway movements, which we could see at Kreuznach, were the result of the previously described and following orders sent to the 16th Division.

On the 15th, towards 11 p.m., a telegram from the War Minister informed the General at Coblenz that in a few hours the mobilisation order was to be expected. Alarming reports were at that time so prevalent that the Commander issued the order himself at 11.30 p.m., just an hour in anticipation of the arrival of the King's order, which came in at 12.30 a.m. next day, also by telegraph, but promising further directions in writing. At Trêves the order was received at 1.15 a.m. on the 16th, and at Saarbrücken at 1.30 a.m. the same day or night. In anticipation thereof proclamations, of one of which the following is a translation, had been prepared.

"SUMMONS (AUFRUF).

"His Majesty the King has ordered the mobilisation of the army. All liable to service, officers on leave, surgeons, and men of the Reserve and Landwehr of all arms, as also the Recruit-Reserve 1st class of the Landwehr-battalion, Saarlouis, have to start forthwith, after becoming acquainted with this order, and to betake themselves by the quickest way to Engers, there to report themselves to their District Commander, Lieut.-Colonel von Plachecki, just as if they had received a written order calling them in.

"The men are to procure from the authorities at their places of residence, a certificate that they are called in. On production of this certificate they will obtain free passage by railway, free billets with meals, and when marching on foot they are to perform stages of from 4 to 5 (German) miles daily.

"The same indulgence applies to those who may in any way have received an order calling them in, and produce the same. In case of disobediently remaining absent, those liable to service have to expect punishment according to the utmost rigour of the law.

"His Majesty relies, however, on the proved patriotic spirit of his people, and is firmly persuaded that that part of it which is bound to the service will hasten with joy to the colours in order to drive out again an arrogant enemy invading our country without cause.

"All authorities of circles and villages are directed to exert themselves in order to secure the most rapid circulation of this order and communication of the same to men bound to serve, as also to provide quarters and food for those hastening to the colours.

"Trèves, the 15th July, 1870.

"(Signed) The Lieutenant-General and Divisions-  
Commander, VON BARNEKOW.

"The Government President, VON ERNSTHAUSEN."

These proclamations were in full circulation early on the 16th. The district commanders and officers destined to form the Dépôt and Landwehr battalions started off at once, and the men followed in the numbers I have described as passing Kreuznach.<sup>1</sup> With regard to the officers, the "State" of every regiment contains information as to the disposal, altered from time to time, of each in the event of a mobilisation. Thus, the 5th Field Officers, a certain number of Captains and Subalterns, have remarks against their names that they have

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<sup>1</sup> Boats on the Moselle were also used for the transport of men and material (clothing, etc., for the dépôt and Landwehr-battalions) to the Rhine. The railway from Trèves to Cologne across the Eifel was then incomplete. So many reserve men of the 70th Regiment, instead of proceeding as ordered to the Rhine, joined at once in the fortress of Saarlouis, that the Commander of the regiment had to apply for some of his equipment to be sent to him, which request the lucky stranding of one of the boats not far down the very shallow Moselle, that summer, made it possible to comply with.

to form the dépôt: the names of the Reserve Officers who have to join are borne on the "State," so that both former and latter know what they have to do without receiving further instructions.

To return to my own movements: walking about Kreuznach on the morning of the 17th with a companion, I came upon a muster and inspection of the horses of the circle taking place in a meadow below the old bridge. It is part of the North-German law that with the exception of officials and post-contractors, every inhabitant of the State is bound, in case of a mobilisation, to hand over his horses against a compensation to be fixed by a commission. Neglect to produce them after due notice being given, renders an owner liable to a fine of 50 thalers. Many likely-looking nags, most of them best fitted for light draught, poured in from the country, while the brougham-steppers of the doctors were conspicuous at the place of muster. My own friend and wife's medical attendant, had to produce a handsome pair of blacks, while his coachman was preparing to rejoin the Artillery. We saw a thousand or so pass before the inspectors, an officer of the train and a veterinary surgeon, with whom were present some civil authorities. I have since learnt that only 119 (amongst these 11 riding) horses were here taken, and distributed between the 19th Regiment, then lying in garrison at Mainz, and the Train Battalion of the Army Corps. The prices paid ranged from 110 to 160 thalers.

Rumours of an advance by the French having taken place on Saarbrücken, commenced on the 16th and continued in circulation all day. On the 17th they increased into positive assertions that the place had been seized, and the reports on being sifted could not be reduced to less than that it was threatened by a large force. Various considerations had made me, up to this time, uncertain as to the course I should take if war could not be staved off. One of them was that in a renewal of my application for extension of leave, I had offered to place myself under the orders of our Military Commissioner at either head-quarters without putting the State to any expense, and that I had received no answer thereto; my sympathies were with neither power more

than with the other; the period I had formerly passed in Germany had been at too early an age for me to acquire much military knowledge, whereas the year immediately preceding my entry into the service, had been passed at Paris, where the kindness of one of the Divisional Generals and of certain officers under him had afforded me opportunities of studying some of the rudiments of their system; also my then knowledge of German was, I believe, even still more limited than what I possessed of the French language. On this day, however, it seemed necessary to do something, for I could not forget that delay in mobilising myself had lost me the chance of witnessing the campaign of 1866, for which leave reached me only contemporaneously with the conclusion of the armistice. With two fellow-countrymen I decided, therefore, on going up by the evening train as far as it might prove possible towards Saarbrücken. Friends assured us that we should never get there, and the ticket clerk at the station refused to book us beyond Neunkirchen, the junction for the Palatinate, some ten miles short.<sup>1</sup> On the train from the Rhine, however, coming up, we were taken charge of by a jolly stout guard with a wonderful capacity for beer and for winking, who promised that he would get us through all right. At Neunkirchen, in my simplicity, I was about getting out to enquire if we could book further, when the door was closed and the signal made, which I was beginning to understand. The train moved on and we arrived at Saarbrücken, or rather St. Johann, soon after midnight, a good deal surprised to find everything very quiet. All along the line the trains we met and the stations we passed were filled with the levies, but still there seemed to be the same absence of enthusiasm that I have already remarked on.

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<sup>1</sup> The reason will appear bye and bye.

## CHAPTER II.

### MOVEMENTS OF TROOPS ON THE FRONTIER BETWEEN TREVES AND SAARBRÜCKEN—DESCRIPTION OF THE LATTER— FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE FRENCH.

EARLY next morning—18th—having declared our nationality for the satisfaction of enquiring police, we sallied from our hotel to seek the commandant and ask permission to visit the outposts, but finding that he had not then risen, we followed to the place of muster, a meadow on the right bank of the Saar, near the old or eastern bridge, the horses crowding into the town seemed the only sign that its normal state was in any wise changed. The inspection was being carried on much as at Kreuznach, but the shew of cattle struck us as decidedly better.<sup>1</sup> On returning to the "Rhine Hotel," the head-quarters of the Commandant of Infantry, we found that he had ridden out meanwhile, but a Subaltern received us very politely and promised to present us as soon as the former returned. So we sat down with him, trying to gain as much information as possible. This amounted to little more than that up to then no French troops had been seen by any of the Prussian force, though they were believed to be in strength in the neighbourhood, and that the garrison of Saarbrücken consisted of three squadrons of the 7th, or Rhenish Regiment of Lancers, that place being their permanent peace quarter, and of the 2nd Battalion of

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<sup>1</sup> The number of horses inspected was 2534, and of those selected 73, nearly all for draught. The prices paid varied from 77 to 222 thalers, the average being about 170 thalers, or £25 10s. It must be understood that 73 was the number of horses required, not that all the rest were unfit for the service.



the 40th or Hohenzollern Fusilier Regiment, which had been detached from head-quarters at Trêves and had arrived at 11.30 p.m., the previous day. Neither was yet mobilised, and the strengths respectively were about 350 men and horses, and 500 bayonets.

From officers who were on duty on the frontier at Trêves and Saarbrücken at that time, I have since learnt that in consequence of alarming reports having been received at division head-quarters from Luxemburg during the night of the 15th—16th, the above-named battalion had been sent to watch the frontier at Wasserbillig.

Half-an-hour after midnight 15th—16th, the Lancer-Commandant received a despatch from the General at Trêves, informing him that war had been declared, and directing him to despatch at once his stores to Siegburg on the right bank of the Rhine, and to evacuate Saarbrücken with his squadrons and a battalion of the 69th Regiment then in garrison with him, the latter to move into the fortress of Saarlouis. The evacuation was effected by three a.m., and orders having at the same time been telegraphed to two squadrons in Saarlouis that one of them should remain, 100 horses strong, in the fortress, and that the other should rejoin head-quarters, the four squadrons concentrated that day at Ottweiler with the view of marching across the Hunsrück Mountains to their mobilising quarter, Siegburg. They had orders while retiring, to destroy the railway in several places, without at the same time damaging masonry works of importance. A like duty was to be performed on the Palatinate line, and for that purpose a squadron was detached to Neunkirchen. As much law as possible was to be given for the railway officials to carry away the quantity of rolling-stock and material they had in store at St. Johann. The two battalions of the 69th Regiment at Trêves were also sent to Saarlouis.

Next day, 17th, different dispositions took place. One squadron named as dépôt, continuing its march to Siegburg, the remaining three in obedience to an order from the General commanding the Army Corps at Coblenz not to give way further than the enemy pushed on,

but to feel him constantly, and to keep the country as much as possible covered, advanced again towards Saarbrücken. One squadron threw out a line of outposts from Drahtzug<sup>1</sup> on the right, by the Inn of the "Golden Gadfly" to St. Arnual and on the extreme left to Fechingen. A second as support<sup>2</sup> was posted at Jägersfreude, while head-quarters and a third remained at Dudweiler as reserve, sending a detachment to Elsterstein to feel the Bavarians. Nothing was to be seen of the enemy, but it was reported from Blieskastel in the Palatinate that Saargemünd was occupied in force. The instructions for these three squadrons were to give up no ground as long as it could be held without loss; to cover as long as possible the withdrawal of the railway material; to obtain as accurate news as practicable of the enemy's movements; where feasible to arrest his advance and by taking up the rails to prevent his rapid progress.

To assist in this task was, by order from Coblenz detached from Trèves, the 2nd Battalion of the 40th Regiment, which started by rail at 5.30 p.m. and arrived at 11.30. At the Divisional head-quarters also was formed a temporary sanitary detachment,—i.e., means for transporting sick and wounded—consisting of 20 two-horse carts with 50 Non-Commissioned officers and men of the 40th Regiment. On the morning of our arrival, the 18th, during the relief of outpost squadron by support and of the latter by reserve, the positions of each were somewhat modified; the advanced squadron furnished picquets on the exercise ground at St. Arnual, and at Brebach; the support bivouacked at the St. Johanner Schützen-haus, a building at the entry into the town from Dudweiler; reserve as before billeted at Dudweiler. Relief took place daily, so that each man had one night out of three in bed. The battalion was distributed as follows:—one company furnishing outposts south of Saarbrücken, another as inlying picquet at the eastern entrance of St. Johann, the remaining two billeted in both towns. About one p.m. a relief took place, whereby the men were enabled to get their meals.

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<sup>1</sup> See map, also sketch of ground.

<sup>2</sup> Teutonice "Replie."

The orders now were that the garrison should hold Saarbrücken until superior forces should compel a retreat. In that case detachments to be sent to break up the lines leading both to the Rhine and into the Palatinate, the same proviso, as before, sparing important works.

It is, perhaps, as well here to attempt some description of the position, now become historical, premising that I am no surveyor, and have only acquired my ideas of the ground after constant and careful study, both during the first days and since the war has terminated, and hoping that the sketch taken principally for the sake of the combat of the 6th August may agree with my description. The two towns lie on either bank of the canalised Saar, slightly below where that stream, coming from Saargemünd, changes direction nearly a right angle from north to west. St. Johann consists of one long regular street parallel to the river, with crosses to the two bridges, and smaller lanes. At each end lead turnpike roads along the river's course, and nearly opposite the new or western bridge, a broad avenue leads up to the railway station.

The heights south by west of Saarbrücken may be looked on as a natural, somewhat irregular bridge-head, with the disadvantage of being enveloped by what may be described as the arc of a circle, of which the Saar in its course from S.E. to N.W. forms the cord.

The bridge-head is formed by the plateau of the exercise ground, rising steeply from the narrow valley through which runs the railway to Metz, the Reppert's Berg, the Nussberg, and the Winterberg; the arc, the extremities of which embrace the bridge-head, by the wooded Schanzenberg, by the forests of Stiring and Forbach, the height of Spicheren and the wood called the St. Arnual Stift Wald. Both natural works are broken, the former by ravines between the Reppert's and the Nussberg, and between the latter and the Winterberg, through the first of which passes the country road from Spicheren to Saarbrücken, and in which stand the buildings called the Red Court; and the latter by the open valley which extends to Forbach between the Spicheren plateau and the forest of Stiring. The distances between the extremities of the bridge-head on

each flank and those of the arc, are small; but that between the Reppert's and the Spicheren height, which latter may be termed the summit of the arc, and which with regard to the deviations from a regular circumference, has a salient position towards Saarbrücken, is nearly 3,000 paces. The open ground thus embraced is undulating for some way below the exercise ground and Reppert's height, but so much of it as extends from the Winterberg along the edge of the St. Arnual Stift Wald and round the front of the Spicheren height towards Forbach is nearly level. The then French frontier embraced the greater portion of the Stiring forest, crossed the open valley and the Metz high road at the public house of the "Golden Gaffy;" and after running along the foot of the Spicheren height, crossed the forest to the Saar in its from south to northern course. The only direct and clear communication between the Rhenish side of the Saar and the covering plateau, is afforded by the new bridge and the Metz turnpike-road, which crosses the line of defence at the "Belle-vue" public-house, leaving the exercise ground on the right. The streets of Saarbrücken near the old bridge are irregular and perplexing, while the approaches therefrom to the Reppert's and Winter heights are difficult to find. The railway bridge is hardly covered, for the forest of the arc comes close down to it. In that narrow valley, which separates the right of the bridge-head from the extremity of the arc, stands the block of buildings called "German Mill," while at the corresponding part of the other flank lies the village of St. Arnual, which, however, to complete the symmetry of the position, wants a bridge over the Saar in its rear. Another difference between the relations of bridge-head to enveloping arc on either flank is, that on the Prussian right, the forest leading out of the former enemy's country is difficult of access and not easily to be turned, while on the left, the forest is limited by the course of the Saar (nearly at right angles to that part of it crossed by the bridges), easy of access to infantry from its St. Arnual extremity, and open to a raking fire both from the slopes of the Reppert's height,

and from the right bank of the river. About three-quarters of a mile north of St. Johann, forested heights conceal the approaches from Lebach, Neunkirchen, and the Palatinate, but the command which the Spicheren height possesses over the so-called bridge-head, gives an enemy, posted on the former, the power of observing whatever may issue from the forest, across the open space to St. Johann. From near Brebach, a village on the right bank of the Saar, a view is to be had between the extremities of arc and bridge-head across the valley to the Spicheren height. The Prussian territory extends as a sort of wedge between Lorraine and Bavaria, as far as Saargemünd, but the ground on this part of the right bank affords no means of observing what an enemy posted behind Spicheren is about.

These two towns formed the extreme left of the North German frontier towards France, while Trèves lay at about the right so considered as long as anything was to be apprehended from Luxemburg. The country immediately covered by Saarbrücken is rich, full of coal, and there are many factories.<sup>1</sup>

Before starting from Kreuznach, and while discussing the chances whether or not the Prussian officers would allow us to see anything, a Danish gentleman in the Diplomatic service, with whom I was acquainted, recommended me to take my uniform or some part thereof with me; consequently I had brought my undress regimentals, and on the advice of our new friend, went off and changed my dress in time to return and find the Field Officers of each arm arrived and in conversation with my companions. Permission to visit the outposts was at once granted, the offer to show my commission being declined; but the heat being great, we postponed

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<sup>1</sup> An inhabitant of Saarbrücken, who has written a description of the occurrences there at the commencement of the war, states that the coal mines of Louisenthal bring in a net revenue of 500,000 thalers yearly, that those of Dudweiler produce over a million centners monthly, and that the various Government works give employment to some 1,900 miners, while the great portion of 150 railway trains, which enter and leave the St. Johann Station daily, are laden with coal. The canalised Saar also formed the means of transport for a great quantity into the interior of France.

our trip until Lieut. Goldschmidt, who was to rejoin his company on picquet in the afternoon, should be ready to take us with him.<sup>1</sup> Dinner took place at the one end of the table d'hôte, which formed the mess of the Battalion Staff, and the usual patriotic toasts of both nations were treated with due honour.

About 4 p.m., led by Goldschmidt, we went out the Saargemünd road to the picquet-house of the 7th Company of the Hohenzollerns, where the Captain invited us to accompany him on a visit he was about to pay to a cavalry post further down the road. *En route* he did his best to explain the lie of the frontiers of France and Bavaria, and having been overtaken by the Captain of the Lancer Squadron, from which the post was furnished, on arrival at this last, commanded by a Subaltern, he entered into a consultation with the two Cavalry Officers as to the necessity of reinforcing the picquet, which stood near the village of Brebach just about the base of the wedge I have before alluded to. At the time, some uneasiness as to the conduct of the Bavarians struck me as entering into the conversation, but I have since learnt that I was wrong, and that a wish to have feeling with some troops of that State on the left flank was all the anxiety expressed.

Returning towards the infantry picquet-house we were met by a couple of files bringing news that the French were reported to be advancing on the opposite flank, and that the company had been ordered through the town thereto. Breaking into a double, we passed the abandoned post at the edge of the town, the captain, who was mounted, leaving us to catch up his company as soon as he had brought his four men within sight of their troops forming up on the market place, which faces the old bridge across the Saar. Here also was the Lieut.-Col. of the Hohenzollerns, whose advice was to follow the road leading in prolongation of the High Street

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<sup>1</sup> I at this time tied round my forage-cap a blue turban, similar to that formerly worn by my regiment in India, for I feared knocking up in the sun. This gave rise to a report that an English officer had altered his uniform to suit the Prussian dress! I also then and afterwards omitted wearing my sword, partly to show I was a non-combatant, partly because it is a plague to carry.

of St. Johann, towards Saarlouis, and passing under the Forbach railway. Reaching, however, the turn to the New Bridge, I caught sight of a detachment of Fusiliers crossing into Saarbrücken, and being somewhat bewildered, thought it best to join them. Arriving at the now celebrated "Belle-vue" public house, this detachment completed the 7th company now posted to observe the Forbach road. Its captain, who had ridden forward to reconnoitre, soon returned with word that there was nothing to be seen in front, and presently an order arrived for him to withdraw to his former position on the south east of St. Johann, the alarm having turned out to be false. Leaving the previous outpost at this approach, the company marched down, the men singing beautifully, I don't remember what, perhaps the "Wacht am-Rhein." It seems the alarm was caused by the French douaniers assembling in numbers on the border line. However, a reconnoissance in force towards Forbach and Styringen was resolved on for next morning.

About 3 a.m., the "general" beat by drum through the streets. Turning out from the "Rhine Hotel," I found the 7th Company posted in the High Street in such wise, as, without being exposed, to command the New Bridge, and, if necessary, cover the retreat of the cavalry, which had been sent along the Forbach road to reconnoitre up to the frontier line. Not making out whether infantry had gone in support, and as it appeared that a retreat was expected, I thought it well to remain with my acquaintances of the previous evening. To suit the case of the French advancing in force and perhaps crossing the railway bridge, whence, while avoiding the town to seize the station, I was informed that the baggage, including the men's packs, was being sent to the rear along the Dudweiler road, which skirts the line, and that two trains were to be held in readiness to convey the battalion, if necessary, towards the Rhine. A seat and conveyance for my little kit were offered and gladly accepted, for my fellow countrymen had returned to Kreuznach the night before. After some hours, during which the inhabitants seemed gradually to awake and turn out with little more disquietude than their wont, the Lancers rode across from the Saarbrücken side,

when we learnt that the French had been seen, but did not appear inclined to advance. It was surmised that as no official declaration of war had reached the Prussian garrison, the French in front might also still be without it. What actually took place was that the three squadrons advanced down the valley from the exercise ground, one on the right, two on the left of the Forbach road (the two latter weakened by one-eighth on various duties), and that close to the frontier rode a line of French skirmishers supported by three or four squadrons of Chasseurs-à-Cheval. Arriving in line with the Prussian custom-house (nearly abreast of the Spicheren height), the two squadrons wheeled to the right with the intention of charging. Observing this, the French squadrons went about, retired along the road as far as the "Gadfly," and then crossed the fields direct to Stiring. The manoeuvre was executed at a sharp trot, and had the appearance of wishing to draw the Prussian squadrons into pursuit, for a Cuirassier regiment was said to have been at Stiring. Prussian skirmishers were then sent out against those of the French, who fired a volley and retired at a gallop.<sup>1</sup> As it did not appear to the Commandant advisable to bring about a further develop-

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<sup>1</sup> I don't know if this, the Rhenish Lancer Regiment (das Rheinische Ulanen Regiment, No. 7), which was the first Cavalry of the North German Army to feel the French during the late war, by the careful yet daring performance of its outpost duties during the fortnight at Saarbrücken, gave rise to the constant French cry on the approach of the Prussians, of "les Uhlans," or to the ridiculous idea of part of the English Press that this description of cavalry was particularly destined to outpost, nay, marauding work. An absurd article appeared in the *Times* during the Autumn of 1870, conveying that notion and likening them to our Indian Irregular Cavalry. I wrote twice to the editor, first informing him that the officers of this particular regiment had told me that they were classed as Heavies, and that during as much as I was able to witness of the campaign, I had observed that different regiments were employed at the outposts as they came to hand; a second time quoting from a book of regulations, stating that Cuirassiers and Lancer Regiments form the Heavy, Dragoons, Reiters (similar to our former Light Dragoons), and Hussars, the light Cavalry. Of course Jupiter was not to be set right by any mortal under the rank of a "special," or "Our own correspondent. All I can say more is, that these Lancers then crossing the bridge, and in their stables, reminded me more of our 9th Lancers in India, than of any Irregulars I ever saw there, Sikhs or Scindees, Mahrattas or Mysoreans.



ment of the enemy's forces, at 5.30 he retired within the previous line of outposts. For further undertakings the principle was peremptorily prescribed, to forbear from provoking the enemy to attempt anything against Saarbrücken, as the possession of that town would assure for him the very important use of the railway. Therefore the utmost watchfulness was to be combined with the appearance of perfect security.

The 7th company of the 40th being now charged with the duty of covering the new bridge as well as of watching the approaches from the west, the Captain, Baron von Rosen, established it as an inlying picquet in the garden of the Hotel Hagen, which lies at the foot of the avenue, leading to the railway station and close to the new bridge. He also invited me to join them there and accompany them in any eventualities that might occur. Thus began a friendship which lasted throughout the campaign.<sup>1</sup>

There was not much to be done during the day but talk over our respective regimental systems, and then, after sharing a bowl of spiced wine, make up by siesta for the early rouse.

At Trêves during this and the previous day, the garrison, which consisted merely of the 9th Hussars and the remaining two battalions of the 40th, appears to have still been occupied in watching the approaches from Luxemburg, at the same time economising the troops as much as possible. Only two detachments were maintained, each a squadron and a company strong. One was placed at Konz, on the right Moselle bank near

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<sup>1</sup> I was much attracted to this regiment by its title, the same as far as special service or arm is concerned, as that of my own, but I soon learnt that the term "Fusiliers" would be better translated, so as to suit our technical nomenclature, when regimental distinctions were more than honorary, by that of "Light Infantry." As a rule each North German Army Corps has, besides a Jäger (Hunters) battalion, a regiment of Fusiliers, which recruits throughout the province generally, and is composed of smaller men picked for smartness and intelligence. The armament is lighter than that of the line; the men carry sword bayonets, which are not usually fixed, as are those in use with other regiments, the equipment of which does not include bayonet-scabbards, the men of these carrying also a sort of sword. The 3rd battalion of each Line Regiment is termed the "Fusilier Battalion," but is armed the same as the others,

the junction of the Saar; the other at Igel on the left bank, with a picquet at the bridge of Wasserbillig, and sending patrols to examine the neighbouring heights and the valley of the Sauer. The troops at Trêves, Saarbrücken, and neighbourhood, had orders to keep provided with a three days' what the Germans call, "Iron ration," consisting of bread, rice, salt, and coffee, also for horsemen, oats. Each soldier has to keep this ration intact, while lying in quarters, to be used only when taking the field. On the 19th, the Divisional General ordered carts to be held in readiness at Ehrang, on the road to the Rhine, to carry in case of need the men's packs, so that these might march with only arms, ammunition, rations, cooking utensils, and great coats. In the course of the same day, news was received at Trêves that the French declaration of war had reached Berlin at one o'clock that afternoon. Thus every preparation was made for retiring before the expected invader, in the least embarrassed manner, and yet for imposing on him to the utmost by a show of security. About dark, something like firing was heard at our post in Saarbrücken from the direction of Saarlouis; the company turned out, moved under the railway, and was distributed by what we should call sections, one on the line, and the remainder in positions commanding the various approaches to the station. Down to the privates everyone seemed to know how to cover himself, either by availing himself of immediate natural advantages, or by bringing to his post whatever useful article, as a log, a barrow or such like, lay within reach, and an artistic cross-fire was provided for, all with little expenditure of voice. No more noise like that of artillery was to be heard, a lurid light which attracted attention towards the south was explained by the railway men to be that caused by the flames of the Stiring factory, and the crossing keepers further down the line gave assurance that they heard no firing. Consequently after having watched for an hour or so, the men were marched back and the night passed quietly.

## CHAPTER III.

### ORGANIZATION AND CONCENTRATION OF TROOPS IN THE RHINE PROVINCE.

NEXT morning (20th) having received news during the night that arrangements I had made for my wife's security had broken through, I decided on returning to Kreuznach and the Rhine, to try and make fresh arrangements so as not to lose this magnificent opportunity.

The first thing to be done was to walk out to the baggage rendezvous towards Dudweiler for my kit, and on this little expedition took place the first incident that made me feel that matters might soon go beyond child's-play: this was a remark with a very hungry look by the Non-commissioned Officer whom Rosen had sent with me: "That's a fine fowl," I have often wondered if the prospect of "requisition" then floated in his brain. There being still time before my train should start, I went up to the "Belle-vue," whence were to be seen the French Vedettes on the plain between the Spicheren height and the wood which surrounds Stiring, took leave of Major von Pestel, of the Lancers, who explained that there was no intention of holding out against an enemy in force; then of Rosen and his company, expressing mutually the hope of seeing each other again, and after a tedious journey by rail, observing as before no signs of excitement on the way, reached Kreuznach in the afternoon.

A curious incident happened to me before reaching Coblenz, whither I had been advised to go, and solicit permission from the General Commanding the

Army Corps to return to the frontier. I was waiting, dressed in plain clothes, about the Bingerbrück Station, (Junction of the Rhenish and Rhine-Nahe lines) had asked some questions as to the destination of a passing detachment, and as to whether re-inforcements were yet on their way to Saarbrücken, and had just finished a note, intended to catch an acquaintance expected to pass towards Kreuznach, when a stout Inspector rushed up and excitedly said: "Legitimatize yourself." "With pleasure, if you will send to the hotel for my papers, which are in my baggage. I am, however, an English Officer, and have made at Saarbrücken the acquaintance of your's, whose cards I can show; also there stands a guard who saw me taken leave of by one at that station." Notwithstanding the evidence, parole and documentary, "That won't do." "Here," calling two sentries, placed at each door of the refreshment-room to keep out the crowd, "take charge of this person. It is not my business to send for your papers, but you may do so yourself." Partly fuming at the prospect of losing the steamer I wished to travel by, partly amused by the absurdity of the situation, I paced about, followed by my guards, whose withdrawal from the doors gave admission to a crowd which speedily formed itself into committees to discuss my case. An acute member of one of these came up and asked me a question in very bad French, which I answered in the same language. "You are a Frenchman," was the decision at once expressed, on which I thanked him, but still recommended a further study of the language. The arrival of a friend with the only papers I had, my commission and copy of the order giving me leave to travel on the Continent, although these were returned as not enough to prove my harmlessness, procured me somewhat better treatment, and withdrawal from the first excited populace I had met with, into the Inspector's office. I was informed that I should be sent under escort to Coblenz, but soon afterwards hearing that a General Officer, who spoke English, was on the platform, I had myself taken before him, who after some conversation and the timely turning up of a Medical Officer, who

had seen me at Saarbrücken, gave his advice to the Inspector—the latter was not under his orders—to release me, which was accordingly done.

At Coblenz, on the 22nd, I obtained an interview with General von Goeben, who had recently arrived to take command of the 8th Army Corps, and who was staying at the "Giant," into which I happened to go for dinner. He received me readily and kindly, listened patiently to my story, only interrupting me with a laugh at the mention of the Bingerbrück incident, to say that thence had been telegraphed to him that there was a suspicious person about, and declining the production of my commission, promised to send me from his office a pass to return to Saarbrücken, merely adding that I could not be allowed to cross the frontier. He was also good enough to assure me that the 40th regiment would not be called back for mobilisation, as had been expected by some of the Officers at Saarbrücken, on their being relieved by a mobilised regiment.

Having completed my private arrangements, and receiving no answer to my application for extension of leave, on the 25th I was taken up at Boppard by the train conveying a battalion of the 4th Brandenburg Infantry regiment No 24 (for the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin's), the Commandant of which was kind enough to give me a seat. At last, that enthusiasm, for which hitherto I had looked in vain, appeared thoroughly roused, and its effects showed themselves in a right practical manner. There was of course the usual cheering by the troops, and the waving of pocket-handkerchiefs from the windows, but what showed the depth of the national feeling, was the arrangement at each station for serving out refreshments to the men. Ladies I saw devoting themselves to the pleasing task, and the required supplies were in many

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<sup>1</sup> A North German regiment may have two numbers. It must have that of its standing in its particular arm of the North German Confederation; and if in the State or Province where it recruits there are more than one regiment of the same sub-division of the arm—ex: Hussars, Fusiliers—these are numbered in the State or Province, much, as are, I believe, numbered our Volunteer battalions in Counties and in the whole force.

cases, as I have since learnt, voluntarily sent from villages at a great distance from the lines of passage. At this stage I do not remember once hearing the cry of "Nach Paris," and the officers I travelled with seemed inclined to discuss less the prospects of the war than the beauties of the Rhine, which were new to some of them.

On arrival at Bingerbrück, to my astonishment, the battalion was ordered by a Staff Officer, to descend and commence marching, and who seemed to be doing the work of a Quarter-master-General, and to have routes ready for each body of troops as it came up. He it was, if I remember aright, who caused me to be introduced to the Commandant of the battalion, arriving by the next train, which continued up the Nahe Valley, and in which I obtained a seat. Starting I could see the Brandenburg battalion already clear of Bingen, marching to the village where it was to be billeted for the night. To my disappointment I found that this train was to proceed no farther than Kreuznach, its contents, a battalion of the "Body-Grenadier regiment" No 8 (or 1st Brandenburg), having likewise to commence its march. It was also stated by the railway authorities that no trains would proceed thence towards the frontier. Enquiries after stage-coaches resulted in the information that there was none but to Trêves. The best part of the remainder of that day was spent by me in company with some rejected and Landwehr men, waiting to get back to their villages, and in hopes that a special train would be run for their behoof. One of them, an old cavalry man, far gone in liquor, was troublesomely indignant at not being allowed to serve, and at my declining to give vent to my sympathy by drinking with him. I was also accosted and pumped by the correspondent of a London paper, who has since acquired celebrity by sleeping in the odour of imperialism shortly after the convention of Sedan, and who was then picking up information through the medium of a German confrère, himself knowing nothing of the language. Next morning hopes of a train were dashed, and I was seriously thinking of walking up the line till overtaken or

otherwise, when happily an order came for the rejected men to be sent up the valley, so that I managed to reach Saarbrücken about five that evening (26th), having picked up on the way a young English university man, who had commenced the walk I had thought of. Proceeding at once to the hotel Hagen, I found it occupied by the 5th company, the 17th having moved across into Saarbrücken, and taken up at the chief custom house, which lies at the foot of the ascent to the "Belle-vue," the charge of observing the direct approaches from Spicheren and Forbach.

Received most cordially by Rosen and his subalterns, I was advised to quarter myself at the nearest hotel on that side, the "Post," where also I found Major von Pestel with the head-quarters of the Lancers. Lieut.-Colonel von Henning, of the Hohenzollerns, had meanwhile been promoted to regimental commander of the 33rd, another Fusilier regiment; and the battalion was now commanded by the senior captain temporarily, until it should be known that the consequent promotion was to be made in the regiment, and that the then 5th Field Officer was to have command of an active battalion. The Lancer-Major renewed the permission to see anything I could, and gladdened me with the information that I had lost but little by my absence.

Before proceeding with an account of what I could myself witness on returning to the troops standing in front of their enemy, I had better try and describe what I believe were the measures adopted or carried out by the commander of the Rhenish Army Corps, and the occurrences on the frontier during the time I was absent therefrom.

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<sup>1</sup> It may be observed here that a North German regiment of Infantry has its companies numbered from 1 to 12, though each battalion has the same 4 permanently belonging to it; also is each told off for field work or exercise into 8 Zügen from right to left. Thus the 4th, 8th, and 12th companies are, when in line, each what we should call the left double company of the battalion; the left half company or Zug of each is numbered 8, and in battalion movements answers to a left flank company of any English battalion. When the third rank of a company is formed into a third Zug, the whole being then in two ranks, this last Zug is not numbered, nor enters into line. Thus No. 7 in this formation consists of the 5th, 6th, and the Schützen or Marksmen's Zügen.

Simultaneously with the instructions sent on the 12th July, by General Herwarth von Bittenfeld (probably directed by the Chief of the Great General Staff) to the 16th division, providing for an undisturbed mobilisation of the reserve troops furnished by the frontier districts, in case these should be at once menaced by the French, went orders for the guidance of the active troops in the same districts in the event of the enemy crossing the frontier. Some of these have been already alluded to as carried out by the divisional general at and from Trêves. They contemplated these troops acting with reference to the reserves preparing on and behind the Rhine, as skirmishers who should only run in, if pressed by superior forces. The Moselle and the Nahe Valleys were to be the lines of retreat. The fortress of Saarlouis, on the contrary, to be held, and the infantry of the garrison reinforced by two battalions of the 69th, which took place on the mobilisation being ordered. Three companies of garrison artillery, however, with a detachment of sappers, all ordered on the 12th, reached the fortress on the night of the 13th. The Commandant was at the same time directed to arm. During the night 15th—16th, the armament of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein was also ordered slightly in anticipation of a telegram from the War Minister, directing in addition the same operation for the fortresses of Mainz and Cologne. On the 16th, the misunderstanding at Trêves, which had caused the premature evacuation of Saarbrücken, and destruction of parts of the frontier lines of railway, had to be remedied, and the necessary orders were executed by the close of the 17th.

During these days also arrangements had to be made for provisioning the Army Corps itself under whatever circumstances might take place, whether of advancing to the frontier, or of receiving the French on the Rhine, as also other corps arriving to operate in its province. The firm of May and Co., in Frankfort-on-the-Main, I believe, contracted to furnish provisions. On the 18th an order was received from the War Minister directing provisions to be secured for two Army Corps in Coblenz and Cologne, and 20 baking ovens to be built at Saar-



louis and Coblenz respectively; also that baking bread should commence forthwith at the latter place and at Cologne. On the following day the same authority directed twenty field bakeries to be established at Bingen, and half the disposable flour in Coblenz and Cologne to be used; also that an auxiliary magazine should be formed for victuals, oats, and hay, at Trèves, the wants being at once satisfied by the intendants. The Commanding general while still charged with the care of securing provisions for two corps at Coblenz, was relieved from the corresponding duty in regard to Cologne, by the Commander of the 7th (Westphalian) Corps. The former was directed to send the requirements for one corps by steamer to Bingen.

After the route for the various troops composing the 8th Corps about to march from the Rhine to the frontier had been received, it was considered advisable, in consequence of the pooriness of the two hilly and forested ridges to be crossed, the Eifel and the Hunsrück, and of the bad Harvest, to cause magazines of provisions to be formed at Darscheid, Wittlich, Berncastel, Ehr, Castellaun, Büchenbeurn, Morbach, Hermeskeil, Wadern, and Dillingen. As the troops received their routes, they were directed to draw supplies from whichever of these magazines might from time to time lie within three German miles of their lines of march. In case, however, these preparations should not be completed in time, the troops were directed to carry with them the first two or three days' supply on pressed carts. Dillingen (just covered by Saarlouis) was to be the principal, and Coblenz the base magazine. In the latter were ordered to be prepared 4,700,000 men's and 1,200,000 horses' rations. To meet the extreme drought of the summer,<sup>1</sup> 30 American pipe-wells were served out to the troops.

On the 19th, at 2.43 p.m., a telegram was received from the War Minister announcing that the Declaration of War by the Emperor of the French had just been handed to the Chancellor of the North German Con-

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<sup>1</sup> The Moselle was so shallow that no steam traffic was carried on above Cochem.

federation.<sup>1</sup> The same day, the route for the several regiments and detachments of the Corps was received from the same authority, with directions to keep it secret. It contained, I believe, fixed instructions as to troops being transported by rail or steamer, but such as prescribed marches and halting places each day for the remainder, were left alterable at the discretion of the Commanding General. What concerned each staff downwards as to its movements was, I believe, communicated thereto on the day after the mobilisation had been completed,<sup>2</sup> in fact the day on which the Army Corps commenced its march. With the addition of the 29th Regiment belonging to the 16th Division, though quartered at Coblenz and Simmern, the cavalry and infantry which had then to march were of the 15th Division, but were accompanied or followed by the proportional Artillery Train and Administrative Departments for the whole Corps. In order to understand the complete organization, telling off or "*Ordre de bataille*"—as the Germans, keeping up so many French technical expressions, introduced, I suppose in the time of Frederic the Great, call it—of the Army Corps, it should be known that first with regard to the cavalry, although the brigades thereof are as a rule attached in peace each to the Infantry Divisions occupying the same district, yet on a mobilisation taking place these are broken-up, and after leaving a regiment of light cavalry with each infantry division, the remainder are formed into special brigades and divisions of their own arm, with Horse or "Riding" Artillery attached.

<sup>1</sup> I believe the French Ambassador performed his duty at 1 p.m. but as will be remembered, the ball had been opened a few hours before on the frontier.

<sup>2</sup> As an instance of the mode in which the interior details of the mobilisation of regiments on the frontier were carried out, the Depot-battalion of the 40th Fusiliers was formed under the Major with seven or eight other officers; men continuing to arrive till the 23rd. For clothing and equipment there were four stores, the first supplying the right flank companies of each of the three battalions, *i.e.*, the 1st, 5th and 9th companies of the regiment, to which the tallest men were told off, and the remaining stores furnishing the other companies on the same principle. The first draughts were despatched, as they were ready, on the 24th, 25th, and 26th. The centre date was that on which the whole army was mobilised.

Thus for the prospective concentration of the 8th Army Corps, the 7th Hussars, lying at Bonn, and the 9th at Trèves, were assigned to the 15th and 16th Infantry Divisions respectively, while the remaining two, the 7th Lancers and 8th Cuirassiers, were told off to the 3rd Cavalry Division. Each Army Corps has a regiment of Field and, if possessing fortresses within its range, 1 of Garrison Artillery, the batteries (12 Foot and 3 Horse) and companies of which in peace are not told off to divisions; an Engineer battalion of 4 companies and a Train battalion of two. I should have mentioned with regard to the Infantry also that there is a Jäger or Rifle battalion bearing the same number as the Corps, not attached permanently to either Division. In this case it was told off to the 30th Brigade. Then the normal composition of three of the infantry brigades was for the time altered in consequence of the three fortresses: Saarlouis, Coblenz, and Cologne being menaced, and therefore requiring each a line regiment as part of its garrison. To replace these three regiments in their respective brigades, one was sent from the 3rd and two from the 4th Army Corps to Coblenz, thence to commence their march to the ground of concentration.

I do not know that any of the Engineers (1 Pontoon, 2 Sapper, and 1 Miner Company) were told off, except to such pressing work as from time to time became necessary, but the Field Artillery was organized as follows: Each infantry division received a foot detachment with staff, of two 6-pr. and two 4-pr. batteries; the remaining detachment with that of horse-batteries formed the reserve or "Corps" artillery: 48 guns always with the line, 42 in reserve, or at the immediate disposal of the Commanding-General—total 90. To this reserve were attached 4 Artillery and 4 Infantry ammunition columns.

The train-battalion furnished 5 Provision Columns, 3 Sanitary Detachments, 1 Horse Depôt and 1 Field-baking-column.

What is called the "Administration" comprised the "Intendance," the chief of which had 4 Deputies: one with each Infantry Division, a third with the reserve

Artillery, and the fourth Supernumerary; the "Field-provision" Department of 1 principal and 4 sub-officers assigned similarly to those of the Intendance; 1 Field-baking Department; 4 Field-hospitals; a Reserve Medical Staff and Hospital Depôt; the Field-postal Establishment, with 1 head-quarter office and 4 Expeditions distributed as above; the Audit Department with similar offices; finally the care of souls, for which duty there were 6 Chaplains: 2 with each divisions 1 with the cavalry brigade, and 1 with the hospitals.

With regard to the country to be passed through, and the point to be marched on by the 8th Army Corps, the former was limited by the War Minister's route in consequence of the necessity to allow the 7th on its right and the 3rd with the cavalry division Rheinbaben, on its left, to advance simultaneously, the former from Cologne and the Lower Rhine; the latter from its places of descent from the railway, Bingen and Kreuznach.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the right flank was contained by the line Euskirchen, Blankenheim, Hillesheim, Daun, and Wittlich to Berncastel, and the left by that of Boppard, Castellaun, and Birkenfeld.

In the first days before the unreadiness of the French began to be known, it was, I believe, contemplated to concentrate this Army Corps on the great plateau of the Hundsrücken, East of Berncastel on the Moselle. Troops were to be there from the 27th, and it was especially ordered that by the 28th a bridge should be ready at the just-named town, in regard to which also instructions were sent on the 21st to General von Barnekow, that if with his small force he should be compelled to evacuate Trêves, a stand should be made there, the town not only being occupied, but being covered from observation. The route, however, which still provided that the 15th Division with the Reserve Artillery, etc., should be pretty close together

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<sup>1</sup> The two regiments, which gave me a lift from Boppard to these places on the 25th, belonged each to a separate division. Therefore, and considering that battalions of the 5th Division only came into action on the evening of the 6th at Spicheren, I imagine that the 3rd Army Corps marched up the valley of the Nahe in two lines.

on the named plateau before the end of the month, indicated Saarlouis as the point at which, on the 3rd of August, the entire Army Corps should be concentrated in its proper place in line, and in this order: the 16th Division—12 battalions, 4 squadrons and 24 guns, in bivouac on the left bank of the Saar, but within the frontier; the 15th—13 battalions, 4 squadrons and (including reserve artillery) 66 guns on the right bank and cantoned as follows<sup>1</sup>: Division Staff with 7th Hussars and 28th Regiment at Saarwellingen and neighbourhood; Staff 29th Brigade with 67th Regiment at Nalbach; Staff 30th Brigade with 72nd Regiment, at Hülsweller; Horse Artillery Detachment and 7th Lancers<sup>2</sup>, at Roden; a company of Pontonniers with train at Fraulautern; 2 companies of Pioneers with train of entrenching tools in Saarlouis; the Foot-Artillery Detachment of the Division at Primsweller and Hüttersdorf; 8th Cuirassiers at Lebach; Artillery Staff and Foot-detachment of the Reserve at Nunkirchen; 1 Artillery and 2 Infantry ammunition columns at Tholey; 3 Artillery and 1 Infantry ammunition-columns with the 33rd Regiment<sup>3</sup> at Wadern; a Pontoon-train with an Infantry ammunition-column at Hermeskeil; Provisions-trains at stages further in rear.

The marches prescribed for each body of troops were about 12 to 15 English miles in length, and each was to have one halting-day. Where they could not find quarters they were instructed to bivouac. Though the lines of march converged from different points, some as far west as Aix-la-Chapelle and the Belgian frontier, Coblenz was to be the base.

The regiment of the Guards, usually quartered on the

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<sup>1</sup> If the student will compare these intended cantonments for the 15th Division with the map, he ought pretty well to understand how Prussian troops were generally distributed when not in first line, and therefore need not always want so detailed information in future.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to the formation of the 3rd Cavalry Division.

<sup>3</sup> This regiment of Fusiliers recruits in East Prussia, though then it was attached to the 8th Corps, and probably had to wait a day or two for its reserve. It was sent from Cologne by Rhine steamer to Boppard and to St. Goar.

Rhine, marched by Simmern on Homburg in the Palatinate, part of it being billeted in Kreuznach, at the time I passed back to the frontier.

Simultaneously with the issue of instructions for the march of the active army, arrangements were made for the garrisons being occupied by the Reserve and Dépôt troops. Changes also took place amongst the staff; thus the present Field Marshal Herwarth von Bittenfeld, having been charged with the general government of the Rhine and other provinces in a state of siege, General von Goeben was promoted from the command of a division to that of this Army Corps, while officers of different ranks relieved the various commandants of their normal peace duties.

The staff of the Army Corps left for Boppard on the 29th to march across the Hunsrück, but the General himself remained behind, so as to keep in telegraphic communication with both army head-quarters, and the frontier.

The 8th Corps had been already told off with the 1st and 7th to form the 1st Army under General von Steinmetz.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OUTPOST DUTY ON THE FRONTIER—SUPPOSED POSITIONS OF THE FRENCH, SO-CALLED, ARMY OF THE RHINE.

To return to what took place on the frontier. The 20th (on which morning I had left Saarbrücken) passed quietly, except that the Prussian patrols doing their work very daringly, a French Chasseur-à-Cheval was shot by one of the Fusiliers. In the afternoon a modification of the infantry's positions was so far made that the 7th Company furnished the outposts on and from the exercise ground, supported by the 8th as inlying picquet in the Hahn (a ravine full of small houses and little gardens skirting the road to the exercise ground on the right), the 5th Company took post for the New Bridge in the Hotel Hagen, pushing a Non-commissioned Officer's picquet down the right bank of the Saar as far as the iron works near Burbach, while the 6th occupied the post on the Brebach road. Thus the whole battalion was on either outlying or inlying picquet. During the day the Commandant had been informed that war had been declared; also all accounts received seemed to indicate that the enemy was concentrating on the line of Forbach-Saargemünd. Trêves was in *statu quo*. Apropos of that garrison, while looking over files of the Belgian "*Nord*" for accounts of the first movements of French troops, I find that in a telegram from Luxemburg on the 16th, the Prussian detachment sent to Wasserbillig was estimated as being 2,000 men strong. The first notice I have come on as to French movements is in a letter from Thionville, of the 17th, mentioning a turn-out having taken place there the previous day, and that dragoons were at Sierk in observation. Mention

was at the same time made of the arrival of large bodies of troops and of material at Metz, to which Marshal Bazaine had also come. It would appear, however, that simultaneously with or prior to the declaration of war, the 30,000 men in camp at Châlons had been transported by rail to Metz in one day. Another account also stated that Marshal Bazaine was in command of about 80,000 men there on the 17th, while General Frossard was already on the frontier with his corps. A letter from Metz of the 18th, contained news that the troops of the latter coming from Châlons had not even entered the station, but had passed on to Forbach, St. Avold, etc., one from Saargemünd at the same time mentioned Lancers and Artillery being there. General de Failly was reported by another to have passed through Hagenau for Bitche. On the 18th, troops of his, the 5th Corps having already preceded him, and as according to an authority, which seems pretty trustworthy, a brigade of that corps was detached to Saargemünd, it may have been there as early as the 19th. On what date General de Ladmirault's corps (the 4th) was formed at Thionville I cannot ascertain, but all the above scraps go to justify the assumption that on the day the Prussian Lancers first faced the Chasseurs-à-Cheval in the amphitheatre south of Saarbrücken, the French had, in support of their reconnaissance, at least 30,000 men within a day's march, and as many as 100,000 within four days' march of the frontier. The strength of the Prussian garrisons along the line of the Saar, could not have exceeded 6,000 men, of whom about 3,500 were to be shut up in Saarlouis.

On the 21st, two reconnaissances by the French were reported as having in the night been directed to the "Golden Gadfly," and to the village of Gersweiler, which lies on the left bank of the Saar, but on the German side of the frontier, west of what I have termed the Arc's extremity, embracing the bridge-head. A patrol from the 5th Company sent to the village, failed, however, to discover anything of an enemy. A Fusilier on another patrol was wounded. That forenoon a change in the infantry positions was effected; so that to watch the right front and flank, the 7th Company



took permanent post as an inlying picquet<sup>1</sup> in the chief custom house, which lies at the corner where the roads leading to the exercise ground and to Gersweiler, respectively branch off; the 5th in the Hotel Hagen. The former company furnished an officer's outlying picquet at the "Belle-vue," and told off a Non-commissioned Officer's party to patrol perpetually along the Gersweiler road, and keep up communication with a "Zug" of the 5th, on outlying picquet at the barricaded railway-bridge. The latter sent out also a Non-Commissioned Officer's picquet to the iron works, and placed a sentry on the New Bridge. For the left flank the 6th and 8th Companies relieved each other daily on either bank, so as to equalize the duties. When on the left bank, the particular company occupied a house as inlying picquet, on the St. Arnual road, sending a Non-Commissioned Officer's outlying picquet to the Winterberg, and constant patrols to the village and the Stift Wald; the rear company, also on inlying picquet on the Brebach road, sent patrols in that direction and placed a sentry on the old bridge with particular instructions to watch him on the new.

From Trêves the same day were sent a battalion, a squadron, and a battery to Perl, opposite Sierk, in the Thionville direction. The remainder of the garrison also was warned to be ready for a retreat, the baggage to assemble at Föhren, on the Berncastel road, the Infantry and Hussars to form outside and south of the town to receive their outposts.

On the 22nd, the General of Division being at Conz, telegraphed for the Hussars and 3rd Battalion of the 40th to be sent to him, in consequence of troubling reports from Perl.

At Saarbrücken a lancer was wounded on a patrol towards Spicheren, and in the afternoon two French vedettes were shot. The 5th Company, which doubled its picquets at the railway bridge, so as to patrol more efficiently towards the Drahtzug and the wood between that place, Schöneck and Gersweiler, received intelligence that the French intended crossing the Saar at

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<sup>1</sup> I translate thus the German expression, "Alarm House."

Völklingen. The news was instantly telegraphed to Saarlouis, whence a detachment of the 69th Regiment was at once despatched to the menaced bridge, and communication established between it and the 5th Company of the 40th. I believe the detachment had a slight skirmish with the French, who wished to cross.

Early on the morning of the 23rd, a French detachment of about a company's strength, commenced firing on the Non-Commissioned Officers' picquet at the Burbach works on the right bank, but were driven back, with a loss estimated at 1 officer and 13 men, whom they carried away. Then its having been reported that the enemy continued to fire on the line of railway from Malstatt to Völklingen, the rest of the 5th Company, leaving only a Non-commissioned Officer and nine men to furnish the sentry on the new bridge, reinforced its picquet at the railway bridge, and quickly drove in the tirailleurs, so that no more firing on the railway took place. The Battalion-Commander, Lieut.-Colonel von Henning, left that day, having been promoted to the command of the 33rd Fusiliers.

The Lancer-Major altered the cavalry arrangements by keeping two squadrons in Saarbrücken, that in the right barrack furnishing picquets and sending patrols along the line: Winterberg to Gersweiler, the other in the left barrack performing the same duty towards St. Arnual and Brebach. What accounts came in were to the effect that the enemy expected a Prussian occupation of Saargemünd.<sup>1</sup>

A fresh outpost disposition took place at Trêves, with the view of looking after the Saar railway, as follows. A squadron at Palzem on the Moselle with a company to fall back on at Saarburg: three squadrons with a company at Tawern, supported by two companies at Conz, which latter detached a Zug to Igel, in order to prohibit exports to Luxemburg. Nothing particular appears to have occurred at that end of the frontier up to the 30th, when the arrival of the

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<sup>1</sup> This militates somewhat against my hypothesis that a brigade of de Failly's Corps had already been detached thither from Bitche.

advanced guard of the 7th Army Corps set the remnant of the Trèves garrison free to move to the point of concentration for the 8th Corps as rapidly as possible.

On the 24th, a Lancer patrol from Saarlouis was fired on by Douaniers and lost two horses. The advance of troops from St. Avold to Forbach was constantly reported. This agrees with the information supplied by the authority<sup>1</sup> I have already referred to, for, in his table of the routes followed by the different French Corps advancing on the German frontier, he places on the 25th July—the 2nd (Frossard's) Corps in front of Forbach, the 3rd (then Bazaine's) at Boulay, the 4th (Ladmirault's) at Thoinville and the 5th (Faily's) at Bitché, though he does not mention the detachment from the last-named corps being at Saargemünd before the 1st August.

With the view of putting a stop to the annoying advances of French troops out of the forest from Schöneck to Gersweiler, whence they could get far too fine a view over the open space which lies to the north of Malstatt and the railway station, and thereby form a judgment of what Prussian force furnished so indefatigable outposts, Rosen started at 2¼ a.m. on the 5th, with a mixed detachment of his own and the 5th Companies, also a half squadron of Lancers from the railway bridge, and lay in ambush (south-west of Gersweiler) till eight a.m., waiting to cut off such of the enemy as might have advanced to that village. None were to be seen, however, though the cavalry patrolled to beyond Ottenhausen, and a party of the 69th on the same duty from Völklingen reported that they had been equally unlucky. It was reported in the evening that about 80 French Infantry had taken post in bivouac on the other side the Winterberg, so two detachments of 50 men each were told off to go round either side of the hill next morning and cut them off, but by the time the hands clapped, the mosquito was gone.

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<sup>1</sup> La Campagne de 1870, Jusqu'au 1<sup>er</sup> Septembre, par un Officier de l'Armée du Rhin (who seems to have had access to much reliable information, and who writes with the view of shewing up his late superiors). Brussels: J. Rozer, Rue de la Madeleine, 87.

The Lancers received at this time, 40 men from their dépôt, and the 40th Battalion 58, and on the following day, 59 of their reserve men. On the 26th it was known that the 5th or Rhenish Dragoon Regiment<sup>1</sup> having arrived on the line, Nieder Wurzbach—Zweibrücken, had by communicating with the left rear Lancer post at Elsterstein, prolonged the covering so far as to protect the railway lines meeting at Homburg. By a reconnaissance pushed towards St. Arnual, during which a horse was lost, the wood ending there was found to be strongly occupied. On the right flank the bulk of the 5th Company withdrew again to the Hotel Hagen, leaving its former outposts at the iron works and at the railway bridge, which last was strongly barricaded. According to *l'officier* etc., the 3rd French Corps had advanced that day towards St. Avold as far as Buschborn.

During all this time of constant work and anxiety—for it resembled little the ordinary outpost duty, when covering the front of an army in position—the heat was very great, and tried both men and horses severely. On the 25th, a heavy fall of rain did work some change for the better, but as far as I can remember, the heat was still so great after my return that I seldom cared to be out between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and as a rule there was not much movement on the part of either side in the middle of the day. I spent my time generally for several hours morning and evening at the exercise ground, watching the Spicheren height and the Forbach plain; mid-day at the "Post," where one end of the landlord's table was occupied by the Lancer mess, the other by bachelors learned in the law, merchants, railway and government officials, and the centre by stragglers like myself. At odd hours I would visit some of the inlying picquets, when as also during dinner, drinks both elementary and compound were pressed on me to an alarming extent. All looked cheerful, the troops standing their work well, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Moltke had telegraphed as early as the 21st to the 8th Corps-Commander, that this Regiment would be detached from the 11th Corps, (Cassel, Frankfort-on-the-Main) for that purpose.

inhabitants shewing few outward marks of anxiety. What pleased me as much as anything was to observe the economy of men's labour at the outposts. I don't believe that during the day there were more than half-a-dozen sentries along the whole ridge, which I have termed the bridge-head. Per contra the patroles, consisting, except at night or daybreak, of usually a "Gefreite" (corresponding about to our Lance Corporal) and a couple of men, were perpetually on the move, going out, to my idea, rather far in front of the chain. The only thing I somewhat disliked was the constant potting carried on by both sides, for unnecessary bloodshed is always to be deprecated. Still as the balance of success lay with the Prussians, the practice served to cause them to despise the much-vaunted Chassepôt, at least, as regarded any accuracy of hitting.

What French outposts were permanently to be seen in front, lay among the trees at the foot of the Spicheren height (where the three huge graves of the Prussian 74th Regiment are now daily visited), and at the "Golden Gadfly," in front of which, and as far as the Stiring forest, was kept up a line of vedettes. In the open space by Stiring, I forget from what day first, I could see a small camp with apparently two batteries parked.

The morning after I returned, by staying too long in bed, I missed seeing what was known as the French potato reconnaissance. At the morning relief of the picquet below the Spicheren, some 40 or 50 skirmishers were extended in the valley, while others in the rear dug potatoes, of which, as of other articles of food, the French Commissariat was reported to have no very large supply. They did not remain long out, and were watched (from the height in front of the Rothen Hof) by a detachment of the 6th Company 40th, till they retired. Meanwhile a Lancer, coming at a gallop from St. Arnual, reported to the Captain that the French were advancing, thereon. With 50 Fusiliers he doubled in that direction, heard a few shots dropping, and found a Lancer's horse lying shot, the furniture of which his men were able to bring away without molestation. The enemy had so

far retired; but it was observed that the gamekeeper's house further on was occupied by infantry and some cavalry men. The country folks declared that there were more columns behind, which kept increasing. Other accounts stated that he had both cavalry and infantry in bivouac at Gross Blittersdorf, and that he had destroyed the Prussian portion of the railway bridge at Saargemünd.<sup>1</sup>

Half the squadron, which had been left at Saarlouis, came out that day and joined what of the 69th was holding the bridge at Völklingen, commencing to patrol towards Ludweiler and Stiring. The forest there was found strongly occupied. In the course of the day returned Lieutenant von Voigt of the Lancers, who had been sent on the night of the 20th, agreeably to an order telegraphed by General von Moltke, to try and destroy the railway between Saargemünd and Hagenau. He had started at midnight with 32 Lancers, some workmen, and a skilled artisan, by special train for Zweibrücken, which he reached at 4 a.m. on the 21st. After remaining there some time and having a good deal of trouble in getting hold of maps, collecting information as to roads, etc., he left with the announced intention of returning to Saarbrücken, but making a long détour, reached a wood in the neighbourhood of Neu Altheim (about half way between Zweibrücken and the frontier), where he concealed his party until a messenger, whom he had sent to try and cross the frontier for information, should return. The latter did so towards evening, but reported that the roads were watched by douaniers and patrols, that he had tried to cross the frontier through a wood, but had been turned back by peasants. Voigt, therefore, leaving the workmen and his least fit horses behind, started with the remainder after dark, crossed the frontier about 11.30 p.m., avoiding roads and woods, and in order to reach the railway steered south by the stars, until about 2 a.m. it clouded over so much that he felt obliged to return to Neu Altheim, which he reached about six. The workmen he found to be very

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<sup>1</sup> The line from Bitsch to Saarbrücken crosses the river twice: S.E. and N.W. of the town mentioned in the text.

impatient and to shrink from any midnight undertaking, therefore making up his mind that they were of no use, he sent them back to Neunkirchen and got the artisan to instruct his own men for the work to be done. He tried again during the whole of the day to get a map and a guide, but without success. He was also informed by the Commandant of Zweibrücken that the presence and object of his expedition were known, and that the Bavarian villages on the frontier were full of spies. However, after lightening his men of everything in the shape of weapons and encumbrances, except lances without pennons, and having each man's forage bag filled with 10 lbs of powder, he made another attempt, but searched for the railway till daylight in vain. On return, he again bivouacked in a wood during the 23rd, but nearer the frontier, so as to spare men and horses as much as possible. That day he managed to get a good map, and had 20 Jägers placed at his disposal, who amongst other things should give out that the enterprise had been given up. Voigt then moved in the evening westward to Rheinheim, placed the Jägers on a bridge which crosses there the brook Blies, and after riding with his lancers for some three hours in various directions, came on the railway where it crosses by a viaduct the road from Bliesbrücken to Wiesweiler. There the expert pronounced it impossible to blow up the viaduct, so all that could be done was to remove the rails and throw down some of the stone supports. This was effected by daylight, when the detachment commenced its return.

Not entirely satisfied with this amount of success, convinced that permanent or serious damage could be caused to the line only at the bridge over the Saar just east of Saargemünd, Voigt made another attempt, reinforced by 20 Bavarian Pioneers, on the night of the 25th-26th, but this last raid met with so many signs of readiness to resist the accomplishment of its object, that the leader deemed it best to return to Saarbrücken.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The details of this enterprise were much confused at the time by French journals, and I believe by some English papers also, with those of a similar undertaking against the same line of railway, but south-east of Bitsch. I presume the latter as well as the former attempt to isolate the little fortress, and the troops concentrating in its neighbourhood from

In the evening, each of the three companies charged with patrolling on the left bank of the river, was directed to send one out under an officer to feel the way up to the frontier next morning before daybreak. Having had notice of these movements I accompanied that from the 7th Company, of 1 Subaltern and 14 Non-Commissioned Officers and men, which moved out, about an hour before daylight, round the rear of the exercise ground by Deutsche Mühle to the Forbach railway, along a narrow road nearly parallel to which we marched, at what, considering the circumstances, I could not help thinking too rapid a pace. However, it was not my business to say anything. A file felt in front and on each flank, and the houses lying in the interval between the two ponds at Drahtzug were searched. Our route led through a wood with the line on an embankment close to the right, on which two flankers marched, till we reached the edge of an open space near Stiring, when a shot came from the bank at the advanced feeler. There was no one to be seen in front, as the Lieutenant in command extended his men behind trees on the edge of the open, which last, of little breadth from the railway, was enclosed on the other side by forest, so that the sentry who had fired must have been well covered.<sup>1</sup> After waiting a few minutes, intently watching the front, we heard a shout from the rear, and facing about could see, not 50 paces off, a line of about twenty red-trowsers extended parallel to us from

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railway and telegraphic communication with either flank, was prescribed by the chief of the North German Great General Staff, and I think that the manner in which each expedition was conducted merits the attention of students of such duty as may at any time fall to young regimental officers, though I am sorry that I have access to no better details of the expedition from Karlsruhe than appeared in the press soon afterwards. Of course the latter was the more difficult task, the railway being so much more distant in that quarter from the frontier, but, therefore, was the need greater for that blending of caution with daring, displayed by the Lancer Lieutenant; the apparent absence of which withdrew, I suppose, two officers from sharing in the campaign, and cost our fellow countryman, in the Baden service, young Winslow—a very gallant young fellow, I have always heard—his life. A similar lesson, though affecting more simple duties, may be learnt by contrasting the conduct of two patrols I am about to describe, having accompanied.

<sup>1</sup> Revisiting the spot this summer, I found an arched passage, in which of course the picquet must have lain; and our right flankers must have come in too soon.



the embankment to a swamp, which ran along our proper left and separated the wood we were in from the one stretching towards the Forbach road. It was very unpleasant, for considering the pace we had marched, I could not but think we must have advanced into line with, if not beyond, the vedettes seen from the "Belle-vue" as keeping up the communication with the Spicheren height and the Forbach forest, and it struck me we ran a fair chance of falling in with another French picquet or patrol from that direction. However, one ought to be thankful for the politeness and chivalrous spirit which prompted the Frenchmen to let us know they were there, instead of quietly walking up and putting their bayonets into whatever parts of our persons it pleased them. The same spirit, akin to that which actuated their Guards at Fontenoy, must have directed the first fire they gave us at the tops of the trees, for I did not hear a single bullet whizz. Our people returned it more practically for, I believe, they hit one or two; then their Lieutenant said he thought there was nothing for it but to run round, in which I cordially agreed with him. Doubling across the swamp, in which our feet sank nearly to the knees, and followed by a few bullets, we then felt our way through the forest, gradually changing direction to the left, myself much regretting having forgotten to bring my compass, till we came to open ground, where the fog prevented us from determining whether or not a rise to the left led up to the exercise ground. Keeping the rest of his party together, the Lieutenant sent a file or two to feel that way, who were at once fired at from what was now their left. Risking the chance, we doubled with them across a swamp (that between the farthest pond and the Forbach road) again to the ascent, which turned out to be the right one. The fire from our friends was this time better, three men receiving bullets through their clothing and accoutrements. It was pleasant to notice a Non-Commissioned Officer keep his pipe lit the whole time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A month or two ago, an English friend put into my hands at St. Johann Station, the "Diary," purporting to be by Mr. Forbes, the correspondent I have mentioned at page 27, who at that time told me

The other two patrols also felt and exchanged shots with the French that morning, returning without loss. On this day arrived the bulk of the reserve men for the 2-40th; in the morning 76, in the evening 366.

In the afternoon, the enemy thought right to have his innings. Immediately after 3 p.m., patrols from the 7th Company picquet on the exercise ground reported that two detachments were advancing, each of about the strength of a company (English), one along the high road direct in front, the other covered by the forest with the apparent intention of gaining the right flank by Deutsche Mühle. Learning the news, Rosen at once turned out his company, which he directed by Zügen to the exercise ground, himself leading the marksmen through the Hahn ravine, one on his right to overlook Deutsche Mühle and the third up the high road. Receiving some shell fire *en route*, the company on reaching the exercise ground—which, by the way, I should have described as a bare quadrangle, the long sides of which marked by poplars, run parallel to the front—was placed as follows: the 6th Zug arrived by the right flank, extended under the front line of trees, and was re-inforced by two sections<sup>1</sup> of the sharpshooters, the remainder of whom lay as support in a trench under the hinder row, detaching, however, a patrol to the menaced right flank. The 5th Zug coming up the high road, was sent into the (for several paces hollow) cross-road leading to the left from the “Belle-vue” public-house. A French line of skirmishers was then about 400 paces distant in front, and advanced about a hundred more, while from four guns—two on the Spichenen and two at Stiring—came a dozen or so of shells, some of which fell on the high road and on the drill ground, while others flew as far as the Hahn. The public-house was, I

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he was writing for the *Morning Advertiser*. To my surprise, I read a much more lively description than I can give, of the same patrol; though neither my friend, the Lieutenant, nor myself recollect seeing Mr. Forbes—though there was an old woman about, as we passed the German Mill.

<sup>1</sup> The two or three Zügen of a Prussian Company (or the halves thereof, when 20 or more files strong) are told off into sections, varying in number, but limited as to strength, between 4 and 6 files each.

think, struck in three places, but no one, civil or military, was hit: though an accident happened afterwards to the finder of an un-exploded shell, who began playing tricks with its fuse.

Failing to cause any further show of strength on the part of the Prussians, the French skirmishers retired, while their artillery ceased firing. It was surmised that the enemy's wish was to ascertain the exact state of things on the exercise ground; whether the same was intrenched or not; whether or not the Prussians had artillery; as also to fix the range for their own guns. Only the last-named object could they have attained. The ground abandoned by their skirmishers was immediately afterwards examined by Prussian patrols, small and great, which ascertained that all was clear up to the line from the "Gadfly" to the village of Gersweiler. Later, however, both a Frenchman and a Lancer fell. Two English gentlemen, just arrived and visiting the outposts, helped to carry the body of the latter in. The news of the above little demonstration, or the sound of the firing—I forget which—reached me at the "Post" so late, that by the time I had arrived at the commencement of the ascent, I found Rosen with the bulk of his company returned to their in-lying picquet-house.

Next morning (29th) I was at the "Belle-vue" by 6 a.m.; but even then was too late to see anything but the usual picquet and vedettes. Another potato reconnaissance by the enemy had, I believe, already taken place in front, and a patrol of the 7th Company had gone out on the right to Schöneck, and returned afterwards without an encounter.

During the day, it was reported that the French were repairing the bridge at Saargemünd, and arranging to cross the river from that quarter; but, notwithstanding that spies were sent out, no more accurate information could be obtained.

In the evening, going up as usual to the "Belle-vue," where I had got into the habit of seating myself, much as at a theatre, on a bench from the public-house, and watching the height and vale, I presently could make out with my glass what appeared to be some Officers

and men come over the ridge from the direction of Spicheren and advancing to the head of one of the ravines, westward of the salient height, place themselves in the position of persons taking angles. Afterwards more men came, and digging appeared to me to be going on, but those about me would not believe that any field work was being thrown up. At last an old fellow with better eyes, who had served in the Engineers, came up, and using my binocular, said he could make out a sunken battery, both plan and profile of which he sent me next day.<sup>1</sup> Before turning in that night the Major, who seemed anxious about an expected attack from the direction of Saargemünd, gave me a hint to be up early. Having told his orderly, therefore, to rouse me, I got dressed next morning in time to see the Commandant ride off with his Adjutant. Doubtful of following them on foot, and uncertain whether infantry were to be employed on that flank,—expecting, too, some results from the intrenching of the night before—I made the best of my way to the “Belle-vue,” which I reached before five, and where everything seemed quiet. It was this morning, if I recollect rightly, that I found the two English gentlemen I have mentioned, with an Interpreter, lying asleep in the open with the Subaltern of the picquet with whom they had passed the night. The Professor soon came to my bench and accosted me much as gentlemen do on board ship, who have slept on deck and turn out on the commencement of washing; then the others, one of whom presently started with me along the ridge towards St. Arnual to see if anything was going on by the left, for nothing was to be observed Spicheren way. Coming to where the wood, which stretches in a sort of half-bow from the Spicheren height, ends a little way east of St. Arnual, we found a party of the 8th Company, under a Non-Commissioned Officer, who told us that a skirmish had just come off.

I afterwards learnt that pursuant to orders given by the Major, in consequence of the above-mentioned reports from Saargemünd, the 6th Company, that morning stationed at the east picquet-house of St. Johann, had

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<sup>1</sup> I am sorry I lost them soon afterwards.

moved out at 1.30 a.m., and taken up a position by the wooded hill called Hall Berg, with outposts occupying the railway station at Brebach, and, farther south, the mill at Güdigen.<sup>1</sup> There the Captain made necessary preparations for receiving an enemy, sending out as usual, numerous Lancer patrols, but after remaining on the watch till about nine, was able to withdraw to his "alarm house" unmolested. Before doing so, however, either he or some of his people were able from the church at Brebach to see a Lancer patrol, on the opposite bank, returning about 6 a.m., from Sembach towards St. Arnual, suddenly fired upon at the corner of the wood by French infantry lying therein near the Forester's house, which stands back from, and high above, the road.

The 8th Company was at that time standing on the road between Saarbrücken and St. Arnual, and heard the firing, but could of course get no view. Presently, however, a Lancer came with the required explanation, and stated that the enemy's party at the forester or game-keeper's house, consisted of from 20 to 30 infantry. The Captain therefore started at once with his marksmen in advance, supported by half of the 8th Zug at about 200 paces in rear, and leaving the remaining half-company in reserve. Passing through St. Arnual, where the villagers also told him that the wood was strongly occupied, he extended his skirmishers and pushed up to the edge, somewhat hindered in the steep climb. Nothing was to be seen of the French until arriving within 300 paces of the wood, whence—not from the edge, but from a bare space higher up and enclosed therein—he received a volley from a party in position, against which he reinforced his skirmishers and drove it back into the deeper forest, with a loss on his part of only one man, notwithstanding what he described as

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<sup>1</sup> A glance at the map, where these places are shown, will satisfy the least professional reader, that in the event of the French having pushed along the right bank of the Saar, a determined stand in that quarter would have been necessary to enable the squadrons and companies on the left bank to effect a retreat. I hope I have made it clear that no view is to be had up the Saar valley southwards, but from east of St. Arnual.

the continued volley-like fire of the enemy's retiring tirailleurs.

I believe a Lancer had been shot as well as the 40th man. This business had just finished, when my fellow-countryman and self, who had heard at least one volley *en route*, but could not get on as fast as we liked across the Winterberg, came near the spot, and we were conversing with the Non-Commissioned Officer—a good English scholar by the way—as, soon after seven, the Captain rode up and made arrangements for patrolling into the wood, giving us the permission we asked for to accompany him. Leaving a party under a Subaltern to watch the outside of the wood, but the inside of what has been described as an are, he entered the wood with a few skirmishers, followed by the Non-Commissioned Officer's party, in all 34 men. A short climb took us on a plateau, the wood on which was open enough to allow of one's seeing some fifty yards in all directions; at one time we got a view into the Forbach valley, at another into that of the Saar beyond Brebach. At last we came on a small open glade, somewhat to the right rear of the Spicheren salient, and estimated by Neydecker, the Captain, as about 2,000 paces from the village of that name. A single voltigeur walked out a few paces from the opposite side and placed himself in a very Hythe-like position. Two or three of our people foolishly, and I suppose nervously, let fly at him; alarm signals were heard; the Captain shrugged his shoulders, saying there was nothing more to be done now that we were discovered, and we returned on our paces. The morning's work had proved that the previous day's reports from Saargemünd were at least premature.

I think it was on this day that I received a letter, addressed to me as belonging to the 40th Regiment, by a young Englishman, who had read some nonsense about me in a German newspaper, and who now asked my advice as to getting sharp into the Prussian service before the fun should commence. I hope he succeeded. During the usual afternoon's lounge at the "Belle-vue," some half-a-dozen Officers, looking like staff—I fancied I could make out the embroidery of a General Officer

amongst them—were to be seen riding over the ridge from Spicheren and down the salient till they could look along the edge of the wood we had patrolled in the morning. Later that evening, if I remember aright, I walked with my fellow-countryman along the front of what I have called the tête-du-pont, and on the left scrambled down to the St. Arnual road, where we had the amusement of seeing his companion marched in as a prisoner in charge of a Lancer. Going on ourselves with the view of studying some more of the ground we had viewed in the morning, *en revanche* we had the mortification to be arrested by a double sentry, composed of reserve men who knew me not, and then to be marched back and halted at the picquet-house by one of them. He thought he had made a great find, but was surprised to see the Captain rush out and ask us in to have a drink, while he returned to his post amidst chaff from his comrades.

Constantly during this time had the French camps in front been reported, by spies and deserters, to be badly supplied with provisions; the potato *réconnoissances* had given colour to the news; a few men brought in, whom I had seen, all looked very hungry, and during the day it was known that detachments had levied provisions from the German inhabitants of Gersweiler. Other accounts received were to the effect that large masses of artillery had been seen on the road from Metz to Forbach; also that the enemy's strength at the latter place and Saargemünd was 20,000. "*L'Officier, etc.*," however, estimates the collective strength of Frossard's three divisions established that day on the Spicheren height, at Etingen and west of Forbach respectively, at 35,000.

## CHAPTER V.

APPROACH OF COLUMNS OF GERMAN 1ST AND 2ND ARMIES—  
EVACUATION BY COLONEL VON PESTEL'S DETACHMENT OF  
SAARBRÜCKEN AND VÖLCKINGEN BEFORE FROSSARD'S AND  
BAZAINÉ'S CORPS.

MUCH to my surprise this summer, I have learnt that on the 30th also our Commandant received a telegram from General von Moltke directing him, in consequence of the enemy's overpowering strength, to send back the infantry of the garrison as soon as possible towards Sulzbach and Bildstock on the Bingerbrück line, and with his cavalry alone to preserve feeling with the French. This time the chief of the Great General Staff forbade the destruction of the railway.

The nearest troops of the 8th Corps advancing from the Rhine were on that day, I believe, as far back from the frontier as Hermeskeil, and northwards, three marches at least in rear, and it may be assumed that the heads of columns of the 3rd Corps coming up the Nahe valley were as far distant, but the arrival of the advanced guard of the 7th Corps at Trêves set the disposable remnant of the 16th Division at liberty from the duty of watching the frontier in that neighbourhood. In fact that night, the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 40th were sent by rail to Dillingen. To this detachment of Fusiliers a battery and two squadrons of the 9th Hussars were attached, and Major General Count Gneisenau, Commander of the 31st Brigade, not yet concentrated, who had been directed to assume temporary command of the troops between the fortress and the Bavarian frontier, and to use the above



detachment as a support between the outposts and the approaching reserve, was able to commence his flank march next day, and place this support in and round Hilsbach, a village about six English miles from St. Johann, on the road to Lebach, up to which latter came the left line of march of the Army Corps.

A strong remonstrance, too, against abandoning the important position of Saarbrücken, unless compelled, together with an expression of the wish to be allowed to defend the place to the last, was telegraphed by Major von Pestel, and his message met with so much favour that, before the arrangements for the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern battalion could be carried out on the 31st, General von Goeben was able to despatch a counter-order allowing the Major to continue with his little force in position until the arrival of Count Gneisenau, who would then direct future movements.

On the last day of July, therefore, the Saarbrücken detachment stood, it may be considered, as advanced guard to its own Army Corps, the line of possible retreat having been shifted from the railway to the Lebach road, on which the 29th Regiment formed a connecting link between the support and the 15th Division. The place of concentration for the Army Corps was at the same time altered to Wadern and neighbourhood, by General von Steinmetz, who directed the various components to accelerate their march and give up such prescribed halting-days as yet remained unused.

That morning I was at the "Belle-vue" about 4.45 a.m. Presently a man, who had crossed from the French lines, was brought to me by the men of the picquet, whose Officer was asleep, and before he was sent down to the Major, I hastily noted his statement as follows: That he was a Prussian subject, but worked habitually at the Stiring factory, and had gone to Metz some time before the war; that then, while trying to get back to his own country, he was arrested with other fellow-countrymen and given the option of serving or remaining prisoner; that they had accepted and were being sent to Algeria, while he refused, until bread and water diet inclined him to agree to an offer that he should

cross the frontier and spy what he could. He had come from Metz the day before; stated that there were 50,000 men at Forbach, two camps lying near the railway; that there it was not believed that Saarbrücken was particularly strong, but yet that there was a talk of falling back. His saying further that there were two batteries encamped near Stiring, which agreed with my observation for some days past, and his description of the Hotel de l'Europe at Metz, where he said he had seen the Emperor, and which I had passed through a couple of months before, appearing correct, inclined me to think some part at least of his story to be true, though I have not read or heard elsewhere that any pressure to the extent stated by this man was inflicted by the French Government on Germans residing in France, at the time of the outbreak of hostilities. He was sent on to Coblenz, and I have never heard more about him.

Presently there came noise enough from the direction of Spicheren and Forbach to remind me of the row the Monlvie's people used to make in Lucknow before venturing on a demonstration against Outram's camp at the Alum Bagh,<sup>1</sup> and having myself begun to part with much of the admiration I had from a boy felt for French troops, I began to think they might possibly be working themselves up for an attack. The morning was so beautifully clear and still, that sounds of all sorts came across more distinctly than I had ever heard them before. Drums beat, trumpets sounded, horses neighed, wheels rolled, nay, that words of command were being given could be heard, the chorus being completed by peals from the church bells of Forbach, Spicheren, and neighbouring villages. It was Sunday, too, and if I were only gifted with that talent of vivid description, which a London editor, to whom I tried to make love some time afterwards, asked me if I possessed, I might now add some beautiful reflec-

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<sup>1</sup> Much that passed at Saarbrücken brought to my recollection that example in our own military history, of how, by a careful conduct of outpost duties, a small force may sometimes impose on and hold in check an overpowering enemy, but if wishing to draw a parallel *multa mutanda nescio mutare*.

tions on the then position of the belligerents, and on the effect that might have been produced by the appearance of an European Minister of the Law, backed by the necessary parochial authority, who should have pronounced the words, "Thou shalt not!"

The noise having ceased, and the Prusians having taken no notice of it, I descended to the hotel with a disagreeable feeling that perhaps I might be wasting my time by staying longer at Saarbrücken, that what I had heard might have been the commencement of a flank march into the Palatinate, and that more active operations might commence in that quarter which I might be too late to witness. During the day, however, all occurrences seemed to me to indicate that at least a large portion of the Prussian Army was now close at hand; the possibility that the French troops in front were immobile from the want of carriage and commissariat had been discussed, and a cavalry demonstration by more than one regiment was talked of, as likely to be undertaken towards Saargemünd next day.<sup>1</sup> I only wished I was mobile enough myself.

What news came in from the quarter to which most attention was I think being paid, by at least the cavalry of the little force, was to the effect that the French that day threw two bridges across the Blies, and pushed their outposts from Saargemünd northwards, to within 500 paces of the German village, Hanweiler; also that trenches and rifle-pits were being dug, and that the heights neighbouring that town were occupied by infantry, the strength of the troops being estimated at a division. The arrival of trains with troops, both there and at Forbach; was also reported. Indeed both the noise and smoke of those coming to and, I think, a little farther than the latter place, was heard and seen from the exercise ground.

For the better security of the right flank, the

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<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that much of what I now relate, particularly as regards movements of troops from the rear, and directions for the eventual evacuation of Saarbrücken, was not learned by me till long after the occurrences themselves.

defence or observation of which from the nature of the ground fell more to infantry, Major Von Pestel had twice asked the Commandant of the 69th detachment at Völklingen to lend him a company. This arrived on the day I am writing of, was quartered in the village of Malstatt, and relieved the 5th of the 40th from the care of the railway bridge. The remaining positions of the infantry thus reinforced were somewhat modified, and the attention of the student of this example of outpost work is begged to the distribution which remained unaltered till the advance of the French. Repetition, it is to be hoped, will be excused. The battalion having by the 28th received its reserves, all but a few men, each of the four companies was now roundly 240 bayonets strong. Beginning with the left bank of the Saar and the right flank—the 7th Company in the before-mentioned custom-house continued to furnish the outlying picquets of 1 Subaltern, 35 men, on the exercise ground—connected at night by two double sentries posted on the high road—of 1 Non-Commissioned Officer and 6 (at night 9) behind the height towards Deutsche Mühle, and of 1 Non-Commissioned Officer and 6 men further to the right rear on the meadow near the Saar, whence the view is clear to the railway bridge. The particular attention of constant patrols to be sent out from both the inlying and outlying picquets was directed towards Drahtzug. To the left, the 6th Company in the old riding school near the east entrance of Saarbrücken, furnished a picquet of 2 Non-Commissioned Officers and 20 men on the Nussberg, with a double sentry at the Löwenberg, while 4 Non-Commissioned Officers and 24 men were kept on constant patrol duty; the St. Arnual road was watched during the day by a double sentry, and at night by 1 Subaltern, 20 men, posted at the opening of the ravine between the Nuss and the Winterberg. On the right bank, the extreme left flank was watched by the 8th Company, half of which occupied houses and enclosures in the village of Brebach, while the remainder bivouacked at the foot of the wooded Hallberg, ready to occupy a neighbouring

burial ground, while a breastwork was raised across the railway. As reserve to these three, more especially the distant-lying 8th Company, the 5th lay between the old bridge and the eastern entrance of St. Johann, with a half Zug detached in the Hotel Hagen, to look after the new bridge and railway station. Both the bridges had been by this time barricaded. From his cantonments at Hilsbach, Count Gneisenau intimated his position and readiness to receive the Saarbrücken detachment if a retreat should become necessary.

Accepting the march-tableau given by "l'Officier, etc.," as correct, both Ladmirault's (the 4th) and Bazaine's (the 3rd) Corps drew towards Frossard that day, the former from Sierk to Halstroff, the latter from Buschborn to Hombourg on the railway Forbach,—Metz.

Next day, the 1st of August, these two French corps continued their concentrating movement, the former to Busendorf, the latter to as near as Merlenbach. The Prussian support moved up to the edge of the Köllerthal forest, and bivouacked at Rastpfuhl, a group of small houses on the Lebach road, whence a good view is obtainable not only over the two towns, but as far to the right as Ottenhausen, and across the so-called bridge-head to the more dominant height occupied by the French.

Moved by the reports in circulation the previous day to expect some immediate undertaking in advance, my two new friends had passed the night at the "Post," and accompanied me before daylight to the exercise ground, but our trouble was not rewarded, for nothing but the usual desultory potting was being carried on in front. Going down we met General von Goeben, who had arrived the previous evening from Coblenz, riding up with the Commandant to inspect the position. His Excellency during the day proceeded to join his headquarters at Wadern, visiting Völklingen, Saarlouis, and Dillingen, *en route*. Communication between the right of the 2nd Army and the 8th Corps (left of the 1st Army), was commenced by the 5th Cavalry Division (Rheinbaben), from St. Wendel.

The dinner was enlivened this day by drinking the health of Lieut.-Colonel von Pestel, whose promotion had just arrived. He returned thanks to each of his officers

and well-wishers, individually, walking round the table and touching, German fashion, the glass of each with his own.

On the morning of the 2nd August, the 2-40th received their last reserve draft, between 60 and 70 men. I was up at the "Belle-vue" about the usual time. Things seemed quieter even than usual.<sup>1</sup> Presently the two English comrades and the university man appeared, and after them a loving party consisting of a young woman about to be married to a man of the 40th, or who, having a brother in the 40th was about to be married to some one else, I forget which, with some relations, one of whom was an artist and began sketching the scene in front, which displayed no more of the enemy than the usual post at the Spicheren, the vedettes on the plain and the guns in park near Stiring. The few Prussian vedettes were this morning furnished by the 9th Hussars, with a view to make the enemy believe reinforcements had arrived, but the usual patrol duty was continued by the Lancers, as best knowing the ground. Presently Colonel von Pestel with the Captain of the 6th light or 4lb. Battery of the Rhenish Artillery, attached for the time to Count Gneisenau's detachment at Rastpfuhl, who had brought two of his guns as far as under the ridge, rode up to choose a position for these, and selected one under the southern trees of the exercise ground. Going down, we Englishmen passed by and inspected the guns, which the Non-Commissioned Officer in charge freely allowed us to see in all their working, then separated so far that the university man turned in to breakfast with me at the "Post," while the others returned to their hotel in St. Johann, receiving from me a promise that if anything took place, or important orders were issued, they should be summoned at once. We, believing that strong reinforcements were now close up, expected an immediate advance across the frontier, and full of that idea I went into the colonel's room, to talk to him about getting my

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<sup>1</sup> The outposts observed that the usual réveillé, beaten or sounded in the French camps, was not to be heard that morning.

pass altered to suit a general break-up of the garrison, and the possibility of my accompanying other troops. He had told me he had chosen another position for the guns on the Brebach flank, the first chosen position having been deemed unsafe with regard to means of retreat, and was reading a note from a newly-arrived English correspondent asking permission to visit the outposts, when an orderly walked in and said "Captain von Rosen sends word that the French cavalry are advancing followed by infantry." Having fetched the Oxonian out and sent boots off to the Hotel Guépratte with a message for the others to repair at once to the "Belle-vue," I ran up thither reaching the height at 10.30 a.m. (as my companion noted by his watch). Rosen had, on receiving the report from his Subaltern on the picquet, that the enemy was seen advancing in the strength of at least a regiment against the exercise ground from the directions of both Spichenen and the Winterberg, at once doubled up with the rest of his company. There he found the picquet already extended as skirmishers by Lieutenant von der Berswordt, the Officer in command, to the left of the high road, reinforced the same and sent half a Zug to extend on the exercise ground, keeping the remainder on the high road just far enough in rear of the crest to be under shelter.

On his left, but hardly, if at all, in communication with him, Captain Grundner, who had not long turned in his company (6th) from an examination of the ground as far as St. Arnual and the wood, without finding anything, received about the same time similar notice from his sentry in front of the Löwenburg and from the vedettes on the St. Arnual road. He instantly sent a detachment to the former height, as also one into the valley between it and the Winterberg, while himself with the remainder moved out on the St. Arnual road. The newly-arrived Commander of the 2nd Battalion, Major von Horn, was at the time, on or near the Winterberg, making himself acquainted with the position and distribution, and directed the detachments as they arrived to form a line of skirmishers facing half left from the general front, so as to prevent the enemy

from, or as his display of force increased, retard him in gaining that height, which has a command over the centre at least of the whole bridge-head.

Captain Kosch, with the 5th Company, was summoned from St. Johann to occupy the ground between the above two, and covered by the half Zug from the Hotel Hagen, which got across first, moved up the "Red Court" ravine, not so fast as he could have wished, for his skirmishers had difficulty in making their way through the hedged gardens.

At Brebach the 8th Company received, about eleven, news by telegraph from Klein Blittersdorf that the French camp at Saargemünd was breaking up, and that strong columns were crossing to Hanweiler. Immediately after that, firing heard from the direction of Spicheren drew attention to St. Arnaul and its wood, whence the enemy could be seen advancing. Captain Neydecker naturally assumed that attacks from the two quarters were coming off, and therefore felt obliged to keep two-thirds of his men watching the approach from Saargemünd. With the available Zug placed in rifle-pits close to the river bank, however, were the two field pieces, which on second thoughts had been sent to that quarter.

On the extreme right the 69th Detachment on the railway bridge had not only its own support at Malstatt, but also the position of Rastpfuhl directly in its rear.

At the last-named place, the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 40th had had some early drill before turning out, on firing being heard from Saarbrücken. The 3rd moved up at once to St. Johann and occupied the two bridges, while the 1st formed line in position with the four remaining guns of the battery, detaching a company half-right towards Burbach to look out for an attempt to cross from Gersweiler.

All the cavalry, two squadrons of Lancers, and a small detachment of Hussars, were withdrawn to the right bank.

To judge from the observations made by the first Prussian officers arriving on the heights, and from what may be believed in that wonderful production, General Frossard's despatch, the French commenced their



attack by getting a brigade of Infantry deployed as quickly as possible in the valley, with its right on St. Arnual, and its rear to the wood, through or from either side of which (or both), it debouched prior to formation covered by skirmishers. These were pushed forward rapidly, the right ascending the Winterberg, and the left brought forward so as to envelop that hill, and attack the Reppertsberg in front. Rosen, on arrival, had made out four battalions in the valley, besides supports to skirmishers, and four on the Spichenen height. My recollection is that on coming up and getting into the hollow-way with the picquet, by craning over and round to half-way between Spichenen and St. Arnual, I could see three battalions beautifully formed in line half left from our direct front. Small detachments of cavalry were in rear of the intervals, between battalions, as if they had at first preceded the formation and then retired through the line. Count Gneisenau, who rode presently from our left along the ridge towards us, told me afterwards that three more battalions stood on the right of those which I could see. A column appeared advancing over the Spichenen height, from which also a battery was shelling us, a mass shewed itself far in front on the Forbach road, and troops were to be seen half-right towards Stiring, though too sheltered by forest to allow of their strength and composition being discerned. A swarm of skirmishers—very thick—was already mounting the slope and pouring a fire over us, which, as well as that of the Artillery from the point whence the range had been tried on the 28th, was well sustained but badly directed. Few shots from the Prussians were wasted, and the men were steady with some few exceptions, who were no doubt affected by the overpowering display before them, by the knowledge that a retreat had been decided on, and by the feeling that they were on a salient, liable to be cut off by either flank. The slope too was unfavourable to their fire being effective; instead of running evenly from crest to base like a glacis, this consisted, in places, of something like a series of terraces formed for cultivation, along each of which the advancing skirmishers had only to double a few

paces before being able to take their aim, if they ever thought of such a thing, from comfortable cover. I went up for a few minutes to the garret of the public-house, but could not see much better therefrom. The eagerness of my fellow-countryman to write down his notes, notwithstanding the interruptions of passing shells, caused some amusement. As Count Gneisenau passed, I understood him to say he would send up reinforcements, and therefore hoped for an interesting day, but I have since learnt that I made a mistake. Anyhow, soon after the General had ridden away, the Adjutant of the battalion rode up with an order for Rosen to withdraw his company and march on Lebach. The Baron, anxious to maintain his position as long as possible, and give time for the covering arrangements in rear, did not withdraw until the order had been repeated twice, and then left the Marksmen's Zug to hold the ridge till the last, telling me to accompany him.

Meanwhile the two guns at Brebach had fired so well across the river, that, according to General Frossard, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the French 67th Line Regiment, found St. Arnual defended by "some batteries of position placed on the right bank of the Saar."<sup>1</sup> Unimportant musketry fire was also exchanged between the infantry on either side. This detachment was left in much uncertainty as to the real state of things until about 7 p.m., when Captain Neydecker learnt for certain that no Prussians remained in either of the towns. He withdrew, covered by the night, and rejoined the battalion by a cross-road march next day.

The 6th and 5th Companies on the left and centre of the heights were of course the first to be hard pressed. Their line of retreat also was the least easy from intricate communication and the longest from the support. The retirement, therefore, was commenced from that flank, but not till so much of what the French called "good countenance" had been shewn by the two Companies that each of them looked like at least one battalion. They had, I believe, withdrawn from the ridge, if not crossed the old bridge, before Rosen began

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<sup>1</sup> Vide his despatch, not his chronicle.

to yield ground. The 7th Company was by him marched down in column of sections, but more than once halted and fronted, especially at the bend, whence the road runs almost straight to the entrance of the town, and rakeable from the Reppert's Berg, in order to guard against the marksmen's Zug being cut off from the left flank.

The skirmishers did not abandon that part of the ridge which covers the road until the company had reached the foot of the hill where the town commences, and close to the picquet-house, opposite to which a hospital had meanwhile been established; before coming down too, they repulsed more than one rush forward of the French, as was told me by my fellow-countrymen who had arrived on the scene of action without knowing of the order to retire, and therefore stayed to the last on the height.

I took leave of Rosen near the new bridge, which he immediately crossed, and for myself felt undecided whether to swear or to cry, at having to give up the position that had been held so prettily, and in which I had begun to take so much interest. As the skirmishers straggled down, they told me that one of my fellow-countrymen had been wounded, so going back to look after him, I met close to the church between the picquet-house and the new bridge, one of them who told me it was true as regarded the other, and that he had left him at the hospital aforesaid. Interchanging expressions of disgust at the turn affairs had taken, and wondering why the French did not follow us through the town, we accompanied the last of the skirmishers to the new bridge and the road along the bank of the Saar, where were placed detachments of a company or two of the 3rd Battalion of the Fusiliers, as also stood the Major with the Colonel of the regiment superintending the retreat. Firing from the Prussians had now ceased for some time, except from the four guns near Rastpfuhl, and for a little while there was none from the French.

Presently however, these seemed to have brought some batteries up to the exercise ground, and as the last 40th detachments crossed the new bridge, shells

as well as Chassepôt bullets began to pour down on the portion of St. Johann between the river and the railway, damaging private houses as well as the station. At that end of the bridge was a barricade occupied by a Non-Commissioned Officers party until the defiling of the troops from the old bridge should be completed. There we stayed a short time, when, observing no signs of the French descending into Saarbrücken, my friend said he would venture across to see if his companion, being but slightly wounded, could not be got away. He ran over alone, for I did not relish the idea of being taken prisoner in uniform, but after waiting awhile and seeing no French come down, though their bullets fell freely on the bridge, I could stand it no longer, but followed and found my friend near the church, unable to find the hospital or, not speaking German, to ask the way thereto. A surgeon told us that the wound having been dressed, the patient had left all right; then re-crossing the bridge and running up the High Street of St. Johann to the market place, we found him as well as the Professor, the latter walking about apparently unconscious that anything particular was going on. They got their packs out of the hotel: mine was brought to me by a man I had sent to the "Post," and who handed me my watch and money correctly as I thought, but instead of carrying the remainder to Heusweiler, where the Fusiliers had given me rendezvous, and whither I directed him, he took up a position in a public-house where he was found that evening dressed in my great coat, on a table, ready with a sword for comers of all nationalities. My property was captured and kept safe for me till the 7th, by a German-American, with whom I had struck up an acquaintance. Returning along the High Street, the inhabitants of which seemed still to take matters very coolly, we were just in time to accompany the last detachment of the Hohenzollerns as it defiled along the Saarlouis road, which runs nearly parallel to the long sides of the exercise ground, where the French were already entrenching themselves, and then changed direction to the right by the Lebach road. The enemy's artillery

practice, there being little return fire, was that day tolerably accurate, and preceding showers of bullets, now and then was to be heard a noise, which some said must be that of the already much-talked-of mitrailleuses, but which I thought very like that of ordinary platoon firing. Where the road passes under the railway, the shells kept constantly striking the masonry of the passage, so that it was advisable to wait for one to strike and explode, then before another came, to rush through. Still there was none of the disorder amongst the Prussian troops to be observed which General Frossard's despatch may have caused to be believed there was; nor do I remember many casualties occurring. After each discharge, the company we were following, gave a cheer for their king. Continuing along the road northward, we were followed still by the French Artillery fire; a shell exploding near us, a splinter therefrom struck the ground about an inch from the toe of the Professor, who turning round made a face which I would have given something to have been able to photograph, then plunged into the wood and I saw him no more. Skirting the forest from the Fischbach and attracted by the flames of a burning house, we came to the ground near Rastpfuhl, where the 1st and 3rd Battalions had bivouacked, and where the former was still drawn up in line behind a natural breastwork, whence, as I have said, the view is good.<sup>1</sup> The company detached early to watch the river half-right; had made sure that no French were crossing from Gersweiler, though they showed on the bank and exchanged shots, both with the 40th and a patrol of the 69th coming from Völklingen. As the enemy retired from the bank with a loss estimated by the Prussians at seven killed and six wounded (amongst them a mounted officer) a patrol was about being

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<sup>1</sup> This summer I came on a number of the *Illustrated London News*, containing a sketch of St. Ingbert in the Palatinate, as the place to which the Prussians retreated from Saarbrücken. A pretty camp is depicted, though the French had not then made the present of tents they gave the Germans on the 6th.

pushed across the river, when the company was called in towards Rastpfuhl.

The artillery practice had now ceased, and to our continued surprise there was no move downwards into Saarbrücken. Half-right, however, were to be seen some battalions moving towards the river near the village of Ottenhausen, which, for some seconds, I hoped came from a Prussian column-head crossing by Völklingen, but about which there was soon no doubt that they were French troops. No immediate molestation was, however, offered from that quarter, and the battalion remained with Count Gneisenau quietly watching the enemy till late in the afternoon, when the General gave the order to continue the retreat. Previously he had sent a party on carts back to Saarbrücken to bring away such of the wounded as might be fit to travel thereon. The news brought by these that only a few stragglers had descended from the French position, which was being fortified, confirmed our observations. Retiring through the Köllerthal wood, we were joined at cross-roads by the party of the 69th, which had been posted at the railway bridge and Malstatt.

The cavalry had retreated earlier, and the Lancer regiment received in the course of the evening its 4th squadron, which had earlier in the day stood in observation at the point where the Dudweiler road enters the forest, and half its 1st retiring from Völklingen, which post was also abandoned. After that, the rear-guard passed the 29th Regiment, which had that day marched from Lebach and now furnished the outposts for the night.<sup>1</sup> Near Heusweiler we found the 40th in bivouac, and passed the night comfortably on straw provided by our friends of the 7th Company.

The casualties suffered by the 2nd Battalion during the day amounted to: killed, 7 men; wounded, 2 officers, 49 men; missing, 44 men—total, 2 officers and 100 men. The proportionally large item of missing was caused almost entirely amongst the two companies on the left flank, whose line of retreat I have described as being the more difficult.

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<sup>1</sup> These two last-named regiments of Foot formed Count Gneisenau's Brigade, the 31st.

The two battalions employed in support and reserve had a loss collectively of 2 officers and 25 men wounded. The Lancers lost no more than a horse killed by a shell near Brebach.

The 69th Detachment's loss I do not know.

The Battery lost 1 man killed; 2 men and 6 horses wounded.

The total Prussian force available at any time during the day to show a front along the line Burbach-Brebach cannot have exceeded 3,700 men, 500 horses and 6 guns. In the short defence of the bridge-head were engaged not more than 800 men and 2 guns, by whom were expended 127 rounds of artillery and 12,143 of rifle ammunition.

In order to carry the position, General Frossard, as one learns from his despatch, made use of, out of his force of 35,000 men<sup>1</sup> and 90 guns available, 19 battalions followed by 10 in reserve along the line from St. Arnual to the railway, with three detached: one on the right along the northern course of the Saar, and two to the left in order to communicate with Marshal Bazaine. He describes the fire of a battery of 12 being directed against what were the two guns at Brebach, and that of three more as also of one of mitrailleuses being made use of from the captured heights against the retreating Prussians. One regiment of Chasseurs à Cheval is mentioned as at first clearing the way for the infantry to advance, and a company of engineers as coming up to the exercise ground after its occupation. That is to say, at least 20,000 men were in movement in the amphitheatre, and we are informed that they displayed satisfactory *entrain* and resolution, also gave proofs of the energy necessary to support the fatigues of a long climbing march—from a distance of two to five miles—and to fight against so strong an enemy.

Moreover, the 3rd Corps, 50,000 strong, then commanded by Marshal Bazaine, was at Forbach, and that day pushed a reconnaissance to Wehrden opposite Völklingen, and probably furnished the troops visible to us from Rastpfuhl in the afternoon. A demonstration

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<sup>1</sup> Following the estimate of "L'Officier, etc.," before quoted, but see appendix.

too, was made by the Brigade of the 5th Corps (Faily's) at Saargemünd, across the Bavarian frontier, as far as Rheinheim. Nothing, however, in either Emperor's telegrams, General's despatch, or newspaper correspondents' letters, goes to show that any serious operation of war, such as piercing an enemy's line, destroying or threatening his communications, or cutting up his different corps in detail before concentration, was contemplated. It has been hardly fair also of the Germans to attribute such barbarity as they have done to the French Commanders when firing on the open town of St. Johann. Did not the Private Secretary of the Emperor tell the Minister of the Interior that His Majesty ordered the mitrailleuses should not fire unless it became necessary? Were not the Artillery Officers far too well satisfied with making the two naughty "pelotons," who would venture on the railway, leave half their men on the ground, to wish to hurt anyone else? Could men so ready with touching expressions of feeling towards their Prince feel capable of harming others than the minions of Bismarck? It is doubtful if the day's display could have passed off in a more perfectly good-humoured and pleasant manner (not to say with better success), even if papa with his Major-General and the tutor had been absent, the movement being directed by the young gentleman who is made the prominent figure in the imperial despatches.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, those to whom I now felt bound by some ties of comradeship, did not share the above placid temper, but it was clearly to be seen that the events of the day had increased in the minds of both officers and men of the 40th Regiment, whatever feelings of contempt for their enemy the fortnight's conduct of outpost duties had given rise to. During that time they had learnt to despise the chassépôt; this day they

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<sup>1</sup> Compare official accounts in Paris papers of beginning of August. On the exercise ground under the trees, near where the trenches were dug, is now a stone with an inscription, which being translated reads:

"LULU'S  
1st Début,  
2nd August, 1870,  
er'd by H. H. Baumann,  
Veteran of 1814-1815."



thought that the mitrailleuses were not so very bad. Indecision of command was patent to the merest drummer. Into my own feelings then, and when reading General Frossard's despatch some days afterwards in Lorraine, entered a half-disappointment that those to whom I had always looked up with respect as my first military instructors, should have made so poor a show, and some shame at recollecting my boyish admiration when witnessing part of the display of strength shown in the Paris streets in December, 1851. I could now have read Mr. Kinglake's first volume with more satisfaction than I did on its first appearance.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CLOSING OF 7TH, 8TH, AND 3RD CORPS NORTH OF SAAR- BRÜCKEN—INFANTRY DRILL—BATTLE OF THE SPICHEREN OR FORBACH.

EARLY next morning, a surgeon having pronounced it advisable that my wounded comrade should quit the field, the three of us, receiving pencilled passes from the Colonel of the Hohenzollern's, started in an open peasant's cart for Neunkirchen, which the conduct of the French on the previous evening led us to hope might be still unmolested. On the way we met a fine looking regiment of Brunswick Hussars, with whose Colonel, and an English Captain, we had a few minutes' conversation, but presently passing the baggage guard, to our subsequent sorrow neglected to stop and talk to the Paymaster. We had got on nearly a mile, when a non-commissioned Officer, with two to four Hussars, overtook us at a gallop, with pistols in their hands, and ordered us to halt. The passes were inspected right side and wrong side up, then pronounced valueless as being written in pencil and wanting a seal. Remonstrances failed to save us from a counter-march to the baggage-guard, whence after some ebullition of temper, we were allowed to proceed on our journey, so that we reached Neunkirchen about noon.

The Professor was still missing, but an English-speaking gentleman kindly undertook to see to my friend's wants, so myself, getting a hint from a gendarme, through whom we had legitimized ourselves, that an engineer party was about starting to break up the line as near as possible to St. Johann, obtained permission to accompany them. The train, which

carried besides the Engineer Officers and Sappers, some of the railway officials and an escort of the 48th Regiment (9th Brigade, 3rd Army Corps), passed Dudweiler and stopped just short of the edge of the wood, whence a view is to be had over St. Johann and Saarbrücken. The Prussian vedettes at this point, furnished by the 6th or Brandenburg Cuirassiers,<sup>1</sup> were under cover, and the ground between their line and the opposite heights seemed unoccupied. To avoid calling down a cannonade from the French intrenchments, the sapper party did not advance any distance before taking up the line, but the railway officials went on near to, if not right up to the station, without molestation. Several Englishmen were also in the wood, and some of them availed themselves of the trains' return to get back to their quarters. From Neunkirchen, whence my wounded friend and companion had meanwhile started for the Rhine, I had a wet but unmolested<sup>2</sup> drive back to the hamlet near Heusweiler, where the cart had been hired, and farther than which, it being midnight, the driver refused to continue. Rousing early from the straw on which I had slept in the cart-house, and looking out for some one to carry a couple of cases I had brought, I was greeted by two foragers of the 29th. Oh, yes, they would be delighted to carry what I had to the 40th; then escorted me straight to their own rear-guard, whence, as usual, I was marched a prisoner to the Commanding Officer, who gave me a man to conduct me to Lebach, which I reached just in time to catch up the 40th marching off. Before doing so I met another regiment and three batteries of field artillery, most of the gunners of which seemed to know French, judging from the playful remarks they favoured me with as I passed.

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<sup>1</sup> Both that and the Hussar regiment belonged to the 5th Cavalry Division, which advanced on the right of the 2nd Army, and took up feeling with the enemy on the 7th Lancers being withdrawn to the right rear of the 1st Army.

<sup>2</sup> I say "unmolested" because the Non-Commissioned Officer of a Hussar patrol, who stopped me for a few minutes, was very polite, and though he did not think much of the pencilled pass, admired the seal on my commission immensely.

The 40th that day rejoined its proper brigade, the 32nd, which then was completed by the 72nd Regiment.<sup>1</sup> The march was a directly flank one, over country pretty free, as far as I can recollect, from forest, the ridges running mostly about parallel to the general line of the frontier. Other columns were taking ground in the same direction, apparently at no greater distance between the parallel routes than would allow of the whole division concentrating in an hour or so.

Here for the first time I could observe the use Prussian officers make of maps. Each Company-Chief had, as he rode along, one in his hand, and kept comparing it with the country, asking the names of all the villages, &c., in sight. The half-way halt was well used; the men un-rigging and setting to work at a thorough good clean of arms and accoutrements. Regimental head-quarters with one battalion moved on to Ottweiler while two companies (one the 7th) turned into quarters at Stennweiler, where also were established the 2nd Battalion's and 16th Divisional-Staff. Remainder were cantoned in other villages lying in echelon to the rear, rendezvous places being named for all.

These movements formed part of an inclination of the whole 1st Army now fronting about south, to its left, directed the night before. The head-quarters of General Steinmetz moved from Losheim to Tholey, those of the 7th Army Corps to Lebach, and of the 8th to Ottweiler. The latter furnished an advanced guard at Landsweiler, sending, patrols to Bildstock and Dudweiler. The 15th Division lay in second line between the latitudes of Dirmingen and Tholey, the Reserve Artillery and supply columns moving up to the same neighbourhood.

Rosen took me to his lodgings where I was

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<sup>1</sup> The 70th Regiment, before the mobilisation, was the 2nd of this brigade, but was left in garrison at Saarlouis, and only later in the campaign moved into its proper place. When in England, I compared my recollections with the detailed list of Army Corps given in Wolff's Organization etc., of the War power of the North-German Confederation; I made sure that it was this regiment, and not the 72nd with which I had been acquainted, and if I had not revisited the German troops, should have remained under that impression.

comfortable enough, barring the want of a change of clothes. The village pump was also convenient for a morning douche. There were at that time accompanying different regiments, a few youngsters who had got squeezed into the military railway trains in which they had acquaintances, and one way or another had pushed to the front. They got food from the soldiers; served them much as do our men's cook and cleaning boys, when allowed in India, and as casualties took place armed and equipped themselves, getting into the ranks when opportunity offered. It was a slight irregularity, shortly afterwards put a stop to, but I thought it at the time rather pretty, and got hold of one of them as a servant.

On the morrow I was recommended to present myself to the Divisional Commander, Lieut.-General von Barnekow. My Coblenz pass was absent with pack at Saarbrücken, consequently I had nothing wherewith to justify my presence before this tough old warrior, who received me rather gruffly, and said he could not allow me to remain within his command, without the sanction of higher authority. Still his bark was worse than his bite, for he gave me a glass of wine and recommended me to go at once to General von Goeben at Ottweiler. A safe conduct and horse were at the same time very kindly offered me by Dr. Rhenius, who was what we should call Deputy-Inspector-General of Hospitals to the Division. He accompanied me to the head-quarters, where the General was pleased to give me a fresh pass, allowing me to go and come as I liked within the limits of his Army Corps. I had a few days previously received a request from a London journal to send letters, and was much inclined to undertake the work, money being quite an object to me. I mentioned the former fact, saying however that I should not like to become a correspondent, if thereby I should lose the comradeship I had hitherto enjoyed with his officers. His Excellency replied that he had now orders to recognize no correspondents, though he had previously given passes to some, and recommended me to write only to my friends. While I was in

the office, news came of the Crown Prince's victory at Weissenburg. The afternoon was profitably spent after return to Stennweiler, in watching the drill of the 2-40th on the assembly ground, where the several companies concentrated. This was limited to practising the favourite Prussian modes of attack, viz: in half-battalion and company-columns with skirmishers. As in the subsequent engagements, parts of which I was able to witness, I could never observe other tactics applied to the infantry, than movements in columns with skirmishers, I may as well try and describe somewhat minutely what I on this day saw and have since learnt, though possibly military students have already obtained this information elsewhere. I have given the strength of a Prussian mobilised company as about treble that of a normal English one, when the latter's regiment is on foreign service. Well, in most field movements, the formation also of the former resembles that of three of our companies, one of which would be a light company on the old principle. When a battalion is formed in line with three ranks, each company is told off in two "Zügen," and the whole manœuvre as do eight companies with us, barring the third rank. Should it be necessary to prepare for skirmishing, the third or "Schützenzüge" are formed by the doubling of the third ranks, in the right wing of the second "Zug" in rear of the first, in the left wing of the first in front of the second. According to the drill book, these "light companies" then move in rear of the flank "Zügen," and if the regiment is to be covered, the line of skirmishers is furnished by the twelve "Schützenzüge" under the direction of the fifth or supernumerary Field Officer. So much of the manœuvre as is described in the last sentence, has, I believe, been discontinued agreeably to late instructions, and at any rate was never to my knowledge made use of during the late campaign. It should be noted that the third rank of each Prussian company, consists of the best shots and men picked on account of superior intelligence. Attack in line being then discarded by Prussian tacticians, the three substitutes therefore are the

"Attack-column,"—exactly the same as our "Close Column of Double Companies on the two Centre Companies," and consisting of four double companies of three ranks, or six of two, according as the "Schützenzüge" have, or have not been previously formed—the "Half-battalion Column" which consists of two "Company-columns" touching, and the last-named which resembles a wing of one of our battalions on a peace-establishment, in column of companies or sub-divisions. The skirmishers were, during this day's practice, extended well in advance, as ours are, or in prolongation merely of the column fronts; our rule to have the supports of equal strength with the skirmishers did not appear to prevail, but small sections of the latter were kept closed and sometimes sent to suitable positions on a flank, whence to pour a cross-fire, or even charge across the front. During the drill my spirit was filled with envy on observing the Captains so little interfered with by the Major. Perhaps the above somewhat pedantic comparison may help what readers I have the luck to get, towards forming clearer pictures of the different battle-fields, when they thus have some means of identifying in the mind's eye, the appearance of different bodies of German troops, with that of various formations of our own on the larger field-days. I would further recommend others than already instructed students, when reading of a regiment, to think of one of our brigades, and when of a Prussian brigade, to picture an English division.

Since hearing of the victory at Weissenburg, and ceasing to expect an advance from the other party at Saarbrücken, I began to form the idea that the German plan must be an advance in direct echelon of armies from the left,<sup>1</sup> and that if the strategy proved successful, there would fall to the lot of the 1st Army, little beyond the task of masking Metz. I had discussed the matter riding back from Ottweiler with Dr.

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<sup>1</sup> Possibly I may not be believed when I say that about this time also I expressed a hope that the echelon would by and bye wheel to the right towards the Belgian frontier, and that the business might be settled without having to meddle with Paris.

Rhenius, whose remark was to the effect: "Wherever old Steinmetz goes, you may be sure there'll be plenty of bullets flying." Still, feeling the time I might be able to remain with the army to be so very uncertain, and fearing that I might not be using it to the best advantage, I decided, after hearing that there were no orders out, of moment, except that the battalion was to move next morning (6th), to Merschweiler, hardly a mile in front, on walking across to Neunkirchen, and perhaps thence going into the Palatinate. A wish to get some kit had also to do with the resolution.

Accordingly, with Frederic, my new servant, I started at 7.30 a.m., and, if I recollect rightly, meeting no troops on the road, reached Neunkirchen about nine. The first news was that Saarbrücken was again in Prussian hands, the French having entirely evacuated the heights they had troubled themselves to take on the 2nd; the next was that a train had started for St. Johann, two minutes before my arrival at the station, and that there was no intention of sending another that day. We two camp followers then started by road; were overtaken about half way by a General with a small staff, whose name I did not learn, and who spoke a few words in passing, without giving any further news; met a batch of newspaper correspondents making for the Palatinate, and fell in with the would-be-bride of the 2nd with companions, who were eager to learn where the 40th now lay. At one village, Bildstock, I found quartered the battalion of the 8th Regiment, with which I had travelled from Bingerbrück to Kreuznach. The Major knew nothing of the re-occupying of Saarbrücken, and had no idea of course that he would have to come on and get wounded the same evening, as I believe he did. About Dudweiler the sound of artillery fire first became heard, and made me put on as much steam as possible, so that we got into Saarbrücken about 12.30, and up to the exercise ground soon after. I felt almost too done, after the 19 miles trudge with increase of pace at the end to mount the hill, had not the beautiful singing of the Brunswick Hussars, marching up at the same time, set me right.

Lying down in front of the "Belle-vue," what I could



see of the already commenced fight was at this stage. —The French were in occupation of the wood to their right of the Spicheren height, but how far through towards St. Arnual I could not make out, of this salient itself, of the sloping plateau and heads of ravines, as far as the wood east of Forbach, which covers the Kreuzberg, and of both this forest and that about Stiring. Although their troops were concealed from view in the wooded parts of the position, they were to be seen on the open portion of the height and plateau, and in the valley where their vedettes used to form a line previously to the 2nd. A strong fire of shells came from both plateau and plain, mostly striking the slopes short of the exercise ground, and few exploding but in the air. The Prussians had already artillery on the ground, three or more batteries being at work on the slopes a little in advance, and more in reserve on the exercise ground. Cavalry were also placed under cover of the old position, in what strength I could not observe, but they belonged to the division Rheinbaben.

A squadron of dragoons, however, was down in the valley a little short of the ground across which the patrol of the 28th had to double under fire from the wood near the railway. In this last appeared at each little opening, some troops, whose nationality I could not distinguish. Wishing to make sure on this point, I ran down to the Dragoons, whose Commanding Officer told me it was all right, they were Prussians. Returning from a fruitless attempt by walking on further to see something more, I found the Dragoons gone, and, if I recollect rightly, a field hospital was established close to the place they had occupied, in fact at the railway end of what is now called the Ehrenthal (valley of honour). Upon the slopes which I then re-mounted, the French artillery fire seemed much as before, rapid but wild. In the cutting the high road makes through the ridge before descending into the Forbach plain, was a General Officer who called out to know who I was, and on my replying that I had a pass from General von Goeben, asked if I had any message from him. When I rejoined, No, but that I would show my pass

if he wished, he declined the offer somewhat impatiently, and rode off. This was, I believe, General von Kamecke, of the 14th Infantry Division, who had commenced the attack, and was still in command of what troops were then on the ground.

It appears that after passing the 3rd, 4th, and 5th, in inactive occupation of the ground between Spichen, Forbach, and the Saarbrücken heights, with his head-quarters at the "Golden Gadfly," General Frossard withdrew to his former position within the frontier during the night of the last day, and re-established himself at Forbach. Although his troops holding the ridge did, I believe, fire occasionally across the towns to the railway, I doubt if a charge of wantonly bombarding them during that time can be held to lie against him, and all accounts agree that he kept his troops under control, and that few excesses took place. But if he be acquitted of anything like wilful barbarity, his conduct shows as much puerile indecision, as was manifested during the first days up to the 2nd. That is assuming that his movements of the 5th—6th were dictated by his own judgment, not by instructions from higher authority, and Napoleon's telegram<sup>1</sup> from Metz at midnight on the 6th goes far to contradict the notion that, in consequence of the defeat of part of the French right wing at Weissenburg, a retreat had been prescribed to the 2nd Corps—granting that the forests in front and on either flank, as also the proximity of the little fortress, Saarlouis, were such as to make a General consider any position north of the line Saargemünd-Merlenbach as a too exposed salient, it must be remembered that as reserve to him there stood on that line, as well as in rear and on the flanks thereof, much larger bodies of troops than the Germans had available, as will be shewn, within the same radius of the point of the salient. It is pretty certain, too, that none of the ordinary preparations for a

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<sup>1</sup> " . . . . . General Frossard, on the Saar, has been obliged to retire . . . . . " See appendix with reference to the General's "Rapport," which I have commenced reading since the text was written.

retreat in presence of an enemy had been taken, such as sending impediments to the rear, and in fact, the whole of the proceedings of the General can be likened only to the conduct of a child, who prepares for a bathe, but draws back his feet as soon as they get wet.

Be all this as it may, early on the morning of the 6th the bridge-head was found abandoned by 2 squadrons of the Prussian 5th Cavalry Division, who pushed across and occupied it.

On the previous evening the orders for the 1st Army had been to march towards the Saar, the 7th Corps<sup>1</sup> between Saarlouis and the Lebach road; the 13th Division to Puttlingen with outposts as far as Völklingen and Rockershausen; the 14th to Güchenbach with outposts towards Louisenthal and Saarbrücken; the 8th between that road and the railway, head-quarters for the latter being fixed at Quierscheid, for the 15th Division at Uchtelfangen, and for the 16th at Fischbach, the Reserve Artillery to be at Illingen. The two battalions of the 69th were withdrawn from the Saarlouis garrison to their proper brigade. It was not contemplated to cross the Saar. General von Goeben rode forward early in the morning to reconnoitre as far as the exercise ground, and on observing the state of things, was about to send for his advanced guard to occupy the old position, when he learned that the 14th Division was already hastening forward for that purpose. Contenting himself, therefore, with tendering to Lieut.-General von Kamecke support in case of need, he returned in the direction of where his head-quarters were to be, until *en route* the sound of firing caused him to send orders to Fishbach for the troops to continue and hasten their advance, while himself rode back to the scene of action.

I do not know if the order of march, which held good on the advance into Lorraine, and which placed the 8th Army Corps in second line, was in existence so early, but it was a pity that the troops which had so long and carefully studied this part of the frontier, were not allowed to lead on this day. The 7th Lancers

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<sup>1</sup> The 1st Army Corps had not come quite up into line.

were away to the rear, and the 40th, as will be seen, was brought up only in time to support, nay save, battalions already compromised.

I believe there is no doubt that Lieutenant-General von Kamecke attacked the French position without orders, and from the very first days after the action, I have constantly heard his conduct blamed. Yet I cannot but think that he was under the full impression that Frossard was in retreat, and that it was the duty of the troops feeling him, not to allow that operation to be effected without molestation. Then if the advance of his division had been confined to that part of the field where its principal success was gained, the forest up to Stiring, and a pause been made for the arrival of fresh troops on both flanks, particularly the left, during which time there was artillery enough at hand to keep the French Divisions on the Spicheren plateau occupied, it is probable that that position would have been carried in a more artistic manner than that of storming it in front. Of course it is easy enough after an action, to criticise the conduct thereof and to say how oneself would have fought it, but what I have to point out here is, as a military lesson, the fact:—not that any Commander failed by observation of the ground, study of the map, or both, to see how the position could be best carried, but how much loss was caused by a too close attention to symmetry of organization, which, until too late, deprived whoever the responsibility of conducting the attack devolved on, of the services of such men, as each within the radius at least of his former picquet, knew not only every accident of the ground, but also the range from every one to another. In proof of this I have to relate that without knowing then of the practicability of the Sauerbach ravine as a means of taking Spicheren in rear, with which the 7th Lancers must have been acquainted, my recollection of the patrol I had accompanied through the St. Arnual Stift Wald, and the certainty that any body of infantry after ascending from the village and covered by artillery fire directed from the slopes of the bridge-head could march in fair order and with advantage to the rear of the Spicheren salient, caused me,

as soon as I saw the attack commence on the northern by west face of that height, to ask with anxiety every officer with whom I could get into conversation, whether no column was pushing forward through the named wood. I believe that it was suggested to the Cavalry Commander to make a diversion round that flank, but that he had objections to such a course.

Still the action was a most brilliant one; the results, both physical and moral, were, it is well-known, enormous, and neither of these might have been attained in so great a degree, if a more deliberate attack had been commenced first on the morrow.

The first Prussian Infantry to enter into action consisted, I believe, of the 27th, followed by the 28th Brigade, the former crossing by the new bridge of Saarbrücken, the latter by that of the railway. Both advanced west of, or *à cheval* on, the Forbach road, the former being then directed from a *débouché* of the forest against the Spicheren height, the latter to Stiring and the "Golden Gadget." Yet neither brigade was kept intact; from the former two battalions of the 74th Regiment were engaged in the capture of Stiring, and some of the 39th in the taking and holding the frontier custom-house at the Folster Höhe. This advance commenced almost immediately after noon with the 53rd Regiment leading on the extreme right. At least one battalion of the 28th Brigade moved on the west side of the railway. The formations were variously in battalion, half battalion, and company columns. For instance, a battalion advancing, always in double column from the centre, would, on its Commander observing more than one point of attack, or if in second line learning that more than one interval in the first line required filling up, without halting separate into halves, these, perhaps, afterwards into company-columns, which would extend their marksmen's *Zügen* generally before closing with the enemy. Part of the forest to be worked through was thick with underwood, so that I believe it took one battalion half an hour to move from Deutsche Mühle, and get formed south-west of the Schanzenberg.

It must not be supposed that from where I stood,

either in front of the "Belle-vue," or lower and further on the Galgen Berg, I could distinctly see any of these formations or movements. It was only at the time I re-ascended the ridge, about 2 p.m., that I remember observing infantry in the open, and then advancing across the front, from right to left, much clouded by smoke, against the high road between the Folster Höhe and the "Golden Gadfly," but accounts of the movements of various regiments I have obtained from Officers or from military periodicals agree with my own observations, whenever I could see swarms of skirmishers followed by larger or smaller masses at close order. I cannot say either for certain at what time it was that I noticed what I recollect looking like two battalions, and which I was then told were of the 39th Regiment, lying down in two contiguous columns at the north-west foot of the Spicheren salient, but it must have been about or just after the last-named hour that those troops—I believe now that the Fusilier Battalion of the 74th Regiment formed part—clomb the steep height and lay down, till closed up, at the edge of the sloping plateau, receiving, I should think, fire from front, right and right rear.

There were many spectators<sup>1</sup> on the ridge from the exercise ground along the Reppert's Berg, and possibly the French took them for Reserve, for, as I descended towards the batteries, I saw a shell soon after drop into the midst of them, though I have never heard that it occurred to any Prussian General to make such use of the Saarbrücken inhabitants, as did Bruce of his gillies at Bannockburn.

The position and strength of the French troops engaged in and available as Reserves to this fight must, according to the "Officer of the Army of the Rhine" before quoted, have been:—the Divisions Laveau coupet and Vergé, occupying the Spicheren height and plateau and Forbach valley, with their outer wings resting in the woods of St. Arnual and Stiring, but how far extended into each, I have not been able to make

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<sup>1</sup> At an upper window of the "Belle-vue" was an apparent correspondent writing very fast.

out. The letters, however, of two French correspondents, who describe the 3rd Chasseurs with the 76th and 77th Regiments being in front of Stiring Wendel at the commencement of the action, lead me to think that Vergé's Division, to which they belonged, did not extend far to their left of the railway. On the extreme right, the division Bataille stood in rear of the village of Spicheren. These three, with a Division of Cavalry and 15 batteries, formed the 2nd Corps, whose Commander, General Frossard, is described by the same authority as passing his time up to 3 p.m., "regulating with the Mayor of Forbach questions more than secondary." Allowing for the absence of this chief and some attendant staff, there must have been, available for the immediate defence of the position, Spicheren—Stiring, from 30,000 to 35,000 men, with 90 guns,<sup>1</sup> while, within call, as additional Reserves stood at Merlenbach (not half the distance from Forbach that Stennweiler, whence the 2-40th marched in the morning, is from Saarbrücken) the 3rd Division of the 3rd—then Bazaine's Corps—say, 10,000 men; at St. Avold (just about the distance the 2-40th had to march), the 4th Division of the same corps; at Puttelange and at Saargemünd the 2nd and 1st Divisions belonging to Bazaine, (the distances from the two last-named places to Spicheren being less than that mentioned just before). Estimating the strength of this corps of four Infantry Divisions at even less than does my authority, there must have been altogether within a radius less than those traversed by the Prussian detachments, which arrived successively in time to take part in the action, a force available of between 70,000 and 80,000 men. A German plan of the battle does show a division of Bazaine's in front of the village of Spicheren, but the "Officer of the Rhine Army" mentions only one from that corps being driven back from Forbach on St. Avold. The two divisions on that, the left flank had the use of the railway, and with any decent organisation might have reckoned on the 4th, Ladmirault's Corps, moving up from between Teterchen and Boulay, into

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix with reference to General Frossard's Report.

line on their left, so as to check Prussian troops crossing the Saar, N.W. of Saarbrücken, while this corps might have relied for support on the Guards then at Courcelles, who seemed to have quietly moved up to St. Avold next day. One might have supposed the division at Saargemünd was detained to observe the Palatinate, but there was already at that point a Brigade of the 5th Corps detached from Bitsche, and it does not appear that the division was charged with such duty, to judge from the account quoted, which states that it, towards 4 p.m., withdrew to Puttelange, near which the 2nd Division had been promenading all day without moving up to the scene of action.<sup>1</sup>

As the troops, which I have estimated at two battalions, gained the edge of the Spicheren plateau, what French Infantry occupied the neighbourhood of the same, appeared to form a re-entering angle, into which the Prussians charged forward in loose order, as I could see, twice unsuccessfully, but still maintained the edge as they fell back. Their line of skirmishers was accompanied by a dog, looking, as well as I can remember, like a black retriever. What prevented the French from charging down from the upper part of the plateau and clearing the salient entirely, I could not perceive. Whether, also, when what I think was the third charge against the wooded side of the plateau proved successful, any troops of the 27th Brigade or others had entered the wood from the left of the road leading from the Red Court up to Spicheren, I am not quite sure, but I know that on the arrival in the plain of the first half of the 3-40th with orders to push into the wood, and get on the enemy's flank, the Commander received an urgent request from the Fusilier Battalion of the 74th, then holding the height, for sup-

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<sup>1</sup> The correspondent of the *Figaro*, who with his "dessinateur," finding matters too serious at Stiring and Forbach, retired on the railway station of Farschweiler; describes meeting about 10 p.m. the last-named division, which had made marches and counter-marches, and of which the brave General Castagny asks: "Where has one fought?" and, on learning the sad truth, clenches the fists, is furious, but promises to himself to be on the morrow in the great game which cannot fail to be played.



port, as the latter were hard pressed, and running short of ammunition.

About this, the most critical time of the action, that is to say between 2 and 3 p.m., on the right the Prussians had obtained possession of buildings which gave strength to the right wing, while it had to show two fronts, against Forbach and the Spicheren plateau respectively, and which enabled it to hold on till dark in the position won, although some of the troops in the open and even in the wood had to fall back some way before a rallying attack of the French. These points of strength were the Custom House at the Folster Höhe, the "Golden Gadfly" and buildings adjoining, a lime-kiln near Stiring, some houses at that place, and the railway embankment; a valuable position, but which cost much. From the account an Officer of the 77th has been kind enough to send me, I gather that the company which, with the aid of some of the 39th, seized and held the Custom-house, had five Officers hit, one of whom continued in command; the Fusilier Battalion at the "Golden Gadfly" had the two company-leaders of the same half battalion killed, 5 Officers wounded, with 17 Non-Commissioned Officers and 215 men killed and wounded. Three companies of another battalion of the same regiment issuing from the Stiring wood, brought to silence a couple of mitrailleuses standing about 400 paces from them on the Forbach road, and had charged past them, but were compelled to fall back without carrying them away. Throughout the day, the regiment lost 5 officers and 115 men killed, 21 and 425 wounded, and 88 missing,<sup>1</sup> and it may be assumed that other battalions working in this wing suffered proportionally.

I have mentioned that the Commander of the 8th Corps, on hearing the sound of firing, sent orders for his troops to hasten their advance. As regards the 7th,

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<sup>1</sup> Two curious coincidences occurred with reference to this, the 77th Regiment. It was, during part of the action, opposed to the French regiment of the same number, (as by the way, stood the two 40ths, against each other, *on* and *up* to the 2nd). Then the men, Hanoverians, recognized in the enemy's ranks fellow countrymen, wearing the Langensalza medal.

it appears that its Commander, General von Zastrow, on his way to Dilsburg, received information, first from the 5th Cavalry Division, then from his own subordinate, General von Kamecke, of the enemy's withdrawal to Spicheren-Stiring. At 1.30 p.m. reached him a further message despatched at 11.45 a.m., to the effect that the advanced guard of the 14th division had occupied the exercise ground and was engaged in an artillery fight; also that the remainder of the Division was following across the Saar. The previously received news had determined the corps Commander to establish his divisions at Völklingen and Rockershausen, with the Reserve Artillery at Püttlingen, and directing the advanced guards only across the river that day so as to reconnoitre Forbach from both flanks, to postpone an attack thereon till the morrow. At 3 p.m. another despatch arrived announcing that the 14th Division was seriously engaged. This determined him to ride on to the field of action, and to send an officer to inform the 13th Division of what was going on. The advanced guard of the latter had reached Völklingen about 2.30 p.m., and the message was received at 5 p.m., which caused a continuation of the march by Gross Rosseln on Forbach.

As regards the 3rd Corps, the arrangements for the day had been that the 5th Division should be cantoned between four and five English miles north of Saarbrücken, the 6th at Neunkirchen. The leader of the advanced guard, however, General von Döring, when reconnoitring south of Saarbrücken in the forenoon, saw that the 14th Division was getting engaged soon after eleven, sent for two battalions and a squadron, which were not far off, ordered up the 8th and 48th Regiments—9th Brigade—with 2 batteries from Dudweiler, and reported what he had done to his Divisional Chief, General von Stülpnagel. The latter approved and sent on the news which reached Corps head-quarters at Neunkirchen by 2 p.m. Thence was despatched the 12th Regiment, and from St. Wendel the 20th, both by railway; the Reserve Artillery was ordered to march from Ottweiler, and the 52nd Regiment<sup>1</sup> with a battery

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<sup>1</sup> The 12th and 52nd formed the 10th Brigade.

was summoned from St. Ingbert. Both the last-named Commander and his superior, General von Alvensleben, pushed on successively to the field.

Close on 3 p.m., just as I was going down the slopes again, anxious to find out if any advantage was being taken of the wood leading from St. Arnual, now the left rear, General von Goeben arrived, and with his staff rode along the Forbach road. About the same time a jolly, stout, rosy-cheeked girl was going the same way, carrying a couple of pails of water to the wounded. I helped her till she met some men, who required her services, then seated myself on a convenient field-boundary stone in the interval, between where the staff and one or two batteries stood on the left of the road. Almost immediately afterwards came up two batteries of the 16th Division, which took position still further to the left. Going towards them I met and spoke to General von Goeben, riding back from the left, whither he had gone to communicate with troops of the 3rd Corps arriving by the Winterberg. He had assumed command in virtue of the presence now on the field of detachments of his own Army Corps: the two batteries mentioned, then another, 3 squadrons of the 9th Hussars, and the 40th Fusiliers, which came up close on their heels. Of course there was little option left in the way of manœuvring; the battalions on the Spicheren height were compromised and required immediate support, which their own division had not to give. The General, therefore, wishing to push through the wood so as to gain the enemy's right, directed the arriving battalions into it, but in prolongation of the 14th Division's left flank. As I stood with the batteries, I saw the fresh infantry arrive, partly by the "Belle-vue," partly over the left of the ridge, descend the slopes in columns, pass by the left of the batteries, and enter the forest. Most halted a few instants before commencing the climb, and broke from larger into smaller and divergent formations in the manner I have described. All sent skirmishers of course in front. Some of them before getting their right sheltered by the Spicheren salient, were exposed to fire not only from the front, but also from guns along the

valley towards Forbach. Not aware that my 40th friends were amongst the new arrivals, I stayed with the Artillery and watched their practice, which was directed principally against unseen batteries over the plateau, the trenches at the head of the ravines between the salient and the wooded Kreuzberg, the reserves in rear and against visible batteries in the Forbach valley. It was not safe to shell the wood in front and half left, for any time after the troops had entered it, for the distances to which they from time to time penetrated were but indefinitely marked by the musketry smoke rising above the trees. It was a beautiful sight to watch the working of these guns—I mean the morale of the service in particular, for I do not profess to be a judge of the comparative excellence of the Prussian field guns. What I admired was, in the presence of so much temptation to fire rapidly, the evident care and deliberation with which the distances were estimated and with which each gun was laid, then the trouble taken and the time allowed to watch the effect of a shot before another was fired. The practice struck me as very accurate. For instance, a French General with some staff showed for a few minutes on the plateau; as soon as they were observed a shell was sent, which burst amongst, or so close to them, that as the smoke cleared away, the different officers were to be seen galloping off. The Non-Commissioned Officers, too, seemed generally very superior men; the way in which, not seeming to care for what fire came about them, they worked their men, some of whom, probably because they had not the more absorbing excitement of directing or firing a gun, but only the mechanical work of carrying ammunition, paid more attention to what was passing in the air than to their duty—won my admiration both then and on many after occasions.<sup>1</sup>

To judge from the infantry fire in the forest in front, the battalions of the left wing—four battalions, I believe, of the 5th Division, had come up with General von Stulp-

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<sup>1</sup> I have been told that re-engaging—Teutonice “capitulating”—of men fit to be Non-Commissioned Officers, takes place to a greater extent in the Artillery than in other Arms of the Prussian service.

nagel—appeared to be gaining ground, but having a very lively fight. On the open part of the plâtau, visible from the amphitheatre, however, progress did not seem to have been made beyond where the road leading up east of the salient, much as does a similar road on the west side of Cæsar's Camp near Shorncliffe, emerges at the corner of the wood, and half-right therefrom the enemy was still in possession.

Between four and five o'clock, I think it was, the Brunswick Hussars advanced up that narrow road, and to my horror I saw part of the leading squadron sent forward on the plâtau. The fire from front and half-right, however, was too severe, so that it speedily wheeled round and returned with some empty saddles. A half-battery of the 3rd Corps then ascended the same road, and the three guns were established on the height.<sup>1</sup> At the same time a field-hospital or "Sanitary detachment," descended to the left of the position previously occupied by the several batteries (which now changed position), and sent out sick-carriers across the space, now pretty thickly strewn with corpses and wounded, between that and the commencement of the height. I distinctly saw shells fall amongst the ambulances, and chassépôt bullets came thickly amongst the carriers; but notwithstanding what has been written on the subject, charity prompts me to attribute this apparent barbarity to nothing more than the usual wretchedly wild firing of the French. Crossing this space—I tried to help a man who called to me, and whom I found to have received two shots in the leg. As I held him in my arms and assisted him towards a tree, where were some of the ambulance people provided with restoratives, he was struck by a third shot in the breast. This made me think it, for the time, to be hardly kindness to lift a man off the ground, and the sick-carriers seemed to be much of the same opinion, for I noticed that most of them did no more than administer

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<sup>1</sup> My recollection is, that on ascending the height I found three guns unlimbered; and that sometime afterwards, three more arrived and were placed in battery further forward; but an account I have read since, states that two batteries mounted the heights.

refreshments to men lying about. Having nothing of the sort about me, I proceeded to ascend the height by the road, which was by no means an easy one, and greatly blocked by Artillery and Hussars. The edge of the wood about the top was occupied by men of different regiments lying under cover, some of whom invited me to lie down with them. Going outside, however, to the half battery, I was surprised to find the Colonel and one of the Majors of the 40th, both dismounted, the latter with a few of his men under cover of a mound. The former, when I asked where his regiment was, said that it was all broken up in the wood, and that their losses had been great. Presently I saw the Commander of the 16th Brigade, Colonel von Rex, and afterwards General von Barnekow, both, if I recollect aright, still on horseback. The former was suffering from a contusion, and close by was a Captain of the 40th, Lütke, wounded in the head, who, however, would neither accept of any attention, nor quit the field. Some corpses and wounded were lying about; a chasseur was groaning badly, but I could do nothing more than put a knapsack under his head, to help him to die more comfortably.

From this height, which I have always termed the salient of the French position, it was not possible to see far to front or left; but to right-front and right, the view was clear as far as the forests on either side of the high road towards Forbach. Half-left there was still a fight going on, where the wood opens on the village of Spicheren; from the front came a somewhat slackened Artillery fire, few shells bursting amongst us; half-right from time to time were to be seen lines and masses of French Infantry, from whom a pretty constant fire came. Some shots, though, must have come from very far, for one struck me on the chest, without hurting me more than if a child had thrown a stone at me. Lower down, between the two forests, it was difficult to make out how matters were progressing; but what I can recollect agrees with what I have since learnt, that the right wing was holding manfully to the won positions, until, at dark,

the 13th Division coming across from Völklingen down on the west of Forbach, relieved it from further work in that quarter, and the arrival of fresh battalions of the 3rd Corps gave it strength to push up from the high road against the last stand made by the French on the Kreuzberg.

Accounts given me by different Officers of the 40th will perhaps enable me at this point, where there appeared to be a sort of slackening both of firing and of movements, to give some idea of what work had gone on in the wood to the left, though I have been unable to make out exactly at what points different battalions, or parts thereof, entered the same.

My own recollection is that while still standing by the guns in the amphitheatre, I saw, between 3 and 4 p.m., more than one detachment of infantry commence the climb some hundred yards north-east of where what I have called the arc sweeps round towards St. Arnual; but going over the ground again more than once last summer, I have failed to find by marks on the trees or by graves, any signs of fighting in that part of the forest, nor do I remember hearing any firing so far to the left. About due south, however, of the bend on the edge of the wood north-east of the village of Spicheren, are large graves, covering the fallen of both sides, so that I conclude some troops were, before night-fall, brought to bear on the French right, much as if they had ascended from St. Arnual, and advanced thence along the ridge.

I believe the orders given to the various detachments as they came up, were to enter and push through the wood, far enough to the left, to get on the above-named flank of the enemy, but circumstances seem to have drawn most of them to feel at once to their right. I have mentioned that the first portion of the 40th arriving, received a call for aid from the 74th. One company therefore (9th) was sent up to relieve that battalion, while the other (12th) was pushing on well to the left, until the Captain falling wounded just short of the edge of the wood, the Lieutenant in ignorance of the precise order given, drew to his right and ascended by the road. The regiment had been

previously distributed in the villages it was to occupy for the night—Fischbach and neighbourhood—and on being directed to the front, pushed on without concentrating by whatever separate strength the billeting arrangements had divided it in. Packs were taken off before ascending to the exercise ground. Thus about an hour after the arrival of the first half of the 3rd Battalion, came up the 10th and 11th Companies, which were at first ordered by the Major to remain in support of the other two; but presently ordered into the fight by General von Barnekow. The 1st Battalion, marching entire, reached the "Belle-vue" about 3.30, and, on descending, broke into halves, one, column supporting part of the 48th Regiment (5th Division) against the salient, the other entering the wood by a ravine to the left, and both presently breaking asunder by companies. On the right, the 1st and 4th reinforced the 3rd Battalion and other troops already on the edge of the wood and plateau, having five Officers wounded, amongst whom, both Captains. The 2nd and 3rd pushed on through the wood as skirmishers, with a loss of three Officers killed, and the Major wounded. On the southern edge they had to receive, with rapid fire, three attempts of the enemy's line to advance. Half the 2nd Battalion (5th and 8th Companies) joined at St. Johann by the 6th, which had been escorting Artillery—came on the ground about four, and was at once directed by company-columns into the wood, left from the 1st Battalion. My old patrolling friend, Captain Neydecker, with the 8th Company, describes entering with one Zug skirmishing, but having immediately to extend the remainder also; finding the ridge abandoned, but on getting through to the open, being stopped by a heavy cross fire. On the south edge he came across two of the colours—each battalion has one—escorted by a half Zug only; then a forward corner of the wood appearing likely to give good shelter whence to pour a fire on the enemy's right flank, with the help of about a Zug of the 48th, and accompanied by one of its Majors, an Adjutant, and another Officer, he rushed towards it, across an open space



of some 400 paces breadth, and held on there till dark. I believe that in the wood, fighting was sometimes at close enough quarters for the Officers to use their revolvers. Both sides were of course then skirmishing, a formation from which, in consequence of the nature of their work, it was impossible for the Prussians to close readily on gaining the open, for it will be easily understood that troops entering after a long and rapid march into a fight of this sort, must, as they advance, lose much of their order, from besides casualties, the stronger bodies and bolder spirits leaving the weaker, and the more careful of themselves, far behind, and then having detachments of other regiments thrown into their line wherever gaps appear. Indeed all I could observe, and have since learnt, makes me doubt if at any time, after a body of infantry had once entered into the sort of bush-fighting described as taking place on either flank, more than a company, if ever a complete one, remained in a Commander's hand. What formation the French preserved, as the Prussians succeeded in showing a front against them along the southern edge of the St. Arnual wood, I cannot accurately describe.

Some of my 40th friends mention being charged by columns, some receiving fire from a line. Later in the evening as the other half of the battery came up and took a position higher and nearer to where the plateau widens, standing beside its guns I could make out two lines, one directly facing us, the other half-right, standing with its rear to the Kreuzberg wood. Almost immediately after additional ground had been gained during the slackening of the enemy's fire, the same revived as if fresh guns or ammunition had been brought to near the village of Spicheren, and, if I recollect aright, we could see the flash of the pieces. The ground, which on the 29th I had observed being surveyed and entrenched, had been abandoned, and was now commanded, if not actually occupied, by Jägers of the 3rd or Brandenburg Battalion, who were lying down at the head of a ravine, somewhat in echelon to our right-front, and keeping up a sharp fire. As it grew dusk it was

difficult to clearly distinguish bodies of troops in front, and to be certain that friends were not pushing across from the left. I had interesting conversation with a Subaltern of the battery, who spoke English. As I asked him once why he fired into the forest instead of at the line of infantry in front of it, he replied "My dear, the Reserves!" Presently, just before it was too dark to see the Kreuzberg longer, a fresh strong column of the 3rd Corps came round the base of the salient and ascended a ravine between our position and the forest on that height. Gaining the plateau it appeared to halt and deliver from its front a rapid fire, the smoke of which prevented my seeing at all what the conduct of the French was, but all firing very soon ceased in that quarter. About the same time, perhaps a little before the above, what seemed to me the last charge was made, firing down in the valley on the French left became more lively, a factory at Stiring was to be seen in flames, and a thick line of skirmishers, about whose nationality we on the height were for some time in doubt, appeared crossing from the Stiring forest to the high road; that they were firing was plain, but whether advancing or retiring was not clear, until an answering fire from the edge of the Kreuzberg wood, as it stretches towards Forbach, reassured us. What battalions composed the column which advanced the last up to the plateau, I cannot say for certain. At the time, I understood that the column was composed of, at any rate in part, the 8th (Body Grenadier) Regiment, but the 77th account I have, mentions the 52nd Regiment—belonging to the 3rd Corps also—by its arrival enabling the battalions occupying and near the "Golden Gadfly" to push up to the height, where the enemy's final stand was made.<sup>1</sup> Anyhow these two last movements drove the French from their last position. Before the firing had entirely ceased, but as it became impossible for the Artillery to discriminate any longer between friend and foe, under Brigadier

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<sup>1</sup> The column was composed, as I have gathered from an account purporting to be official, of the 3rd Jägers, two battalions of the 8th, the Fusilier Battalion of the 12th, and the 52nd Regiment.

von Rex's direction, Colonel von Eberstein called up all the men of different regiments about, and pushed forward along the edge of the wood, to the angle where the south side begins, the wounded Captain accompanying. At the same time, to my great delight, for I knew only that the casualties of the regiment had been numerous, Rosen emerged from the wood and joined us. His company, the 7th, had in the forenoon been told off to cover the General Staff at Quierscheidt, and although he afterwards obtained permission from the Chief thereof to move forward, could not reach the field till late, then was detained to cover guns on the Winterberg, so that he did not get up the heights till about 6 p.m. We neither saw nor encountered any enemy, and as I have said, the firing soon ceased. A watchful position was however maintained for some time, as it did not appear whether the enemy had retired definitely, or only into the wood, whence to resume the fight on the morrow. A patrol sent out, discovered an abandoned camp; and soon a Dragoon Regiment, and after it fresh battalions came up, all of which helped to set it pretty well beyond doubt that the French had fled.

Then begun the work of collecting regiments or of disentangling what was left of each. By the time I got tired of looking on, there had not been collected more than a strong company, and I believe there were men of all three battalions together. Among the Officers was the boyish-looking but manly young Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, who though wounded in the arm by a bullet, which at the same time carried away a piece of his sword, never knocked off work all the time he had to carry his hand in a sling. There occurred like instances of endurance amongst other ranks, and some of them have been detailed in German newspapers, but these two instances amongst the Officers came especially to my notice. However, it is not for me to sing the praises of those who have become my almost intimate friends. The regiment was especially reported on for its behaviour by the Brigade and Corps Commanders, and was thanked by its King. I can only say that the educational experiment of a certain pair of instructors on the 2nd

had taken effect in a way they did not expect:—that of producing throughout all ranks of their Prussian pupils a stern determination to make the best use of their innings, when these should come with no such rules tacked on as hampered them at the commencement of the struggle.

No pursuit was, I believe, attempted the same night, but the enemy's retreat was so hasty that the camp and baggage of a whole division at least, with wounded and prisoners, afterwards ascertained to number 800, from all regiments of Frossard's Corps, remained in Prussian hands.

The 13th Division having crossed the Saar at Völklingen and had a skirmish at the Rosselns, pushed its head as far as Forbach before night-fall, but can hardly be said to have had further influence on the fight than by neutralising the only division of Bazaine's Corps, which seems to have come up to help, and by narrowing Frossard's line of retreat. The advanced guard of 2 battalions and 6 guns became masters by dark, of the fortified Kaninchenberg, south-west of Forbach. The Commander of the 7th Prussian Corps, General von Zastrow, arrived on the field towards dark and assumed chief command, but by that time the business was pretty well settled. The remainder of the 16th Division came into bivouac in the amphitheatre, and the 15th close to Malstatt. The 3rd Corps was also, I believe, completed by the arrival of the 6th Division. The number of battalions, however, brought into action did not exceed 27, and of batteries 10, so that including Rheinbaben's Cavalry and allowing not more than 3 per cent. for baggage guards, sick, and stragglers, also setting off the division of the 3rd French Corps against the 13th Prussian, as many as 30,000 Germans with 60 guns coming up in detail may have helped to carry the position held from the commencement by a force of between that number and 35,000 French with 90 guns.<sup>1</sup>

While the regiment was collecting, I walked a little way towards where corpses and wounded were lying pretty thick, but found that having no refreshment by

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix with reference to Frossard's report.

me I could do no good myself, and that there were plenty of sick carriers with torches to carry away those who could bear transport. Returning to the mustering place, I found that the 40th had marched off, and was myself arrested and taken to the Major of a newly-arrived battalion, who let me go, but would not give me a man to escort me down. It was troublesome work getting down the narrow road on which fresh arriving troops were jammed with those ordered to the rear, and I was again arrested by a gendarme till taken charge of by a Major of Dragoons, to whom I had spoken earlier in the day, after which I fell in with a party of the 40th, under Bersvordt, going to fetch water from Saarbrücken for the regiment which was to bivouac on the plain. Joining them, I managed to get through the crush into the town and to the "Post," whence the landlord was persuaded to send some food and liquor out to the Officers. It was after eleven and I wanted some of both, so much so that a bottle of champagne quickly disappeared, and after speaking to General von Barnekow and the other General I had met nearer the commencement of the business, who took the trouble to apologise for his hastiness then, very unnecessarily, as I thought, (for I am pretty sure if I had been engaged at his work, I should have felt inclined to wish any bothering stranger to a hotter place than was to be found on that field), I was fain to lie down on a couch in the *porte-cochère*.

## CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATIONS FOR ADVANCE INTO LORRAINE—LOSSES  
DURING THE BATTLE AND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE LATTER—  
CARE FOR WOUNDED—KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN.

AWOKE at daylight by General von Barnekow's riding out, I found that some one had been kind enough to throw a military cloak over me, and soon afterwards, to my great comfort, was visited by the German-American bearing the kit which he had been so kind as to take care of for me. Its being now well known that the French had retreated, and that France was to be invaded somewhat further than had been done the day before, I set to work to provide myself with both a horse and money. A saddler, to whom I repaired, was so sulky as to refuse to sell me one of two good horses he said he had, because I had, on a former visit, refused to ride one he had prepared for me, as I thought the charge for hire too great, but M. Guéppratte, of the hotel close by, promised me a retired racer then on a trip in harness to Neunkirchen, and Mr. Simon, a banker, to whom I had the slightest of introductions, was kind enough to cash my cheque on London, and to give me breakfast besides. After that I paid a visit to a wounded Subaltern of the 40th, comfortably lodged, and then going behind the railway station of St. Johann I found the regiment itself, with arms piled in line of columns, with rest of the 16th Division. The battalions looked stronger than I expected to find them after witnessing their condition at the close of the action the night before. Their loss had not yet been ascertained for certain. The division was then ordered across the frontier, as I then understood, to

the right front, and I returned to the "Post," observing *en route* the railway station to be much battered, and meeting many wounded and prisoners being brought in from the front. All day long troops were passing through Saarbrücken to get into their proper places in line, followed by baggage and trains of sorts. About noon I was sent for by a young Englishman who had obtained an appointment to a Lancer Regiment, but not having been able to join it yet, had attached himself in the previous day's fight to an Infantry Regiment and got slightly wounded in the foot. He required my assistance to the place where the baggage of his regiment was expected to pass, and wanted me to write home to his people and tell them he was all right, but in consequence of delays, caused by the block in the streets and on the new bridge, he was able to stay with me till about four o'clock and write his letter himself. He had before served the Austrians, and I am not sure that he had not once held a commission in our service; I hope he has got through the rest of the campaign all right. Towards evening I paid another visit to the wounded 40th Lieutenant who sat comfortably in the open air opposite the Hotel Guéppratte, where were established the head-quarters of the 3rd Army Corps. While with him two Officers of that staff introduced themselves, and inviting me across, presented me to their Chief, who, unsolicited by me, said when at leisure, he would ask his General's permission for me to accompany them. Having still in my head the echelon movement, and knowing nothing of the concentration of five French Corps round Metz, the proposal suited my views, and I was quite inclined to embrace the offer if I could get equipped for mounted work in time. However, there was so much to occupy all the staff, that I suppose the matter was forgotten, for I heard no more of it.

It was rather difficult to get any supper at the Hotel Guéppratte that night, and as I was prowling about the kitchen in search of proviant, a "Justiz Rath," or sort of Judge Advocate, apparently on the same quest, came on me suddenly from round a corner, and ordered

me to legitimize myself. I was able to do so, we swore eternal friendship, and seated ourselves at the same table, where, however, to the disgust of my legal military friend, I was served first, so that he had to make several further orders before he got his portion. Then good spirits having been restored, the utmost cordiality prevailed, and toasts the most patriotic, belonging to both nations, were most loudly done justice to, with such scraps of English song as this messenger of military law had with him.

Early next morning, on rousing at the Post, I found the other bed occupied by a civilian stranger, who, getting up and making the most rapid toilet I think I have ever seen performed under a roof, drew himself up at the door, made an obeisance, informing me of his name, and forthwith disappeared. I went over to St. Johann to get my horse, and at Guéppratte's found in the dining room assembled a number of medical and intendants Officers sitting in consultation with gentlemen whom I supposed to be civil officials or proprietors from the neighbourhood. Observing, however, that they all wore a decoration, and that one had on a scarlet coat, I asked a waiter who they were. "Knights of St. John," was the answer, and Malta, with the Middle Ages, came tumbling into my brain on the top of other unwonted ideas that recent events had given rise to. I am ashamed to say that I had read nothing of their performances in 1866, and, on going out, wondered if I should find squires waiting with coats of mail and armed chargers at the door. In case some of my readers know as little about them as I then did myself, I may as well give a short summary of what I have learnt as to the modern organization of the order in Prussia, from a German work on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Up to 1798, the year in which the order lost Malta, and with that island its unity and independence, the knights living elsewhere than at head-quarters were divided into "Tongues," and these into "Priories" or "Balliwicks," the heads of which all owed fealty to the Grand Master. One of these last divisions was the

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<sup>1</sup> Geschichte des Johanniter-Ordens von Karl Falkenstein, 1867.



Bailiwick of Brandenburg, extending territorially over the countries since united as Prussia. While in other countries of Europe the members of the order and then possessions underwent various treatments; in France and the countries more closely affected by the revolution, ceasing entirely to exist; in Russia, during the reign of the Emperor Paul, who sought to use the order as a means of influence over the entire nobility of Europe, converted into a State institution; in Austria and some of the Italian states, being kept up or revived in various ways with the fanciful views, never carried out, of devoting the order at one time to the suppression of the slave trade, at another to the duty of enforcing quarantine laws in the Mediterranean, lastly to that of defending the Holy See<sup>1</sup>—in the years 1810-'11 King Frederic William III. of Prussia, suppressed the Bailiwick of Brandenburg, and confiscated, as State property, the lands attached to the various offices. In the following year the same sovereign founded a Prussian order of St. John as a memorial of the old Brandenburg Bailiwick of St. John of Jerusalem, but until 1852 the institution had no practical importance. At the close of that year King Frederic William IV., with the view of providing funds for erecting and maintaining hospitals, imposed on the knights—one of the qualifications for which rank by the way already was noble birth—a donation of 100 thalers, and an annual subscription of at least 12; as also a vow to hold the creed of the Evangelical Church, to acknowledge the foundation-objects of the order, never to expose themselves to a dishonouring affront, of fealty to the King, and of obedience to their superiors. Prince Charles of Prussia, has been since 1853, the Grand Master. Besides establishing in different parts of Germany over a dozen charitable institutions, during the sufferings of the Christians in Syria several members went out to give assistance, and founded a hospital at Beyrout. During the War, with

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<sup>1</sup> According to the above authority there existed in 1859, about 110 actual members of this, the Catholic branch of the order, as well as some 800 honorary knights, these last including ladies of distinction, decorated with the cross of St. John.

Denmark, the Order rendered important services to Austrian as well as Prussian troops, and during the Campaign of 1866, as many as 150 knights gave their personal services, about 50,000 thalers (£7,500) were contributed, and many private residences devoted to increase the number of their hospitals, which gave shelter to 469 sick, and 1086 wounded; of the extent of their services during the late war I am unaware, but from this day up to the blockade of Metz, I constantly saw the knights at work.<sup>1</sup>

Both towns commenced decorating about noon, the King being expected to arrive at about 3 p.m. No one, however, of higher rank than General von Steinmetz, commanding the 1st Army, whose head-quarters were then at Völklingen, appeared. I may as well give here the translation of a General Order issued by him on that day, which I have since taken from a newspaper:

"SOLDIERS OF THE 1ST ARMY:—

"By command of His Majesty the King, the 1st Army will cross the French frontier to-morrow. Let us greet this first result of our exertions up to this time by a cheer raised to our wise, most High Commander, as we tread on foreign territory. For your good behaviour in the coming struggle with an army possessing equal advantages with ourselves, I have as security, your patriotism, your courage, and your proper pride, which forbids you to allow the affront which an arrogant adversary has inflicted on us, to remain on you unresented. The peace-loving citizen and peasant, however, you will say to yourselves, stands under the protection of humanity, under Prussian discipline. I trust to you to deny neither the one nor the other by excesses, which your superiors could

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<sup>1</sup> I have omitted to mention that during my walk from Neunkirchen, on the 6th, I noticed both there and in villages on the road, many houses fitted up as hospitals. The Saarbrücken inhabitants also devoted themselves to care for the wounded. My friend the banker had, I think, three wounded Officers in his house. Medical men not actually taken for military service, came up from other German towns and gave their aid from time to time.

"never allow. Whenever and wherever the enemy  
 "may stand opposite to us, I expect him to be attacked  
 "with the greatest resoluteness. For cavalry there is  
 "already an old-established elementary rule, always to  
 "attack the first. The excuse to have been able to do  
 "nothing, I cannot accept in a case where the thunder  
 "of cannon is to be heard. Much, rather, has each body  
 "of troops to march in that direction, and when arrived  
 "on the battle field, to learn quickly the state of the  
 "action, so as to be able to attack immediately, in a  
 "suitable manner. The same must serve as a rule of  
 "conduct to every superior Commander in case of a  
 "pitched battle.

"To one thing more I must call attention: What can  
 "be done on one day must never be distributed between  
 "two days. Only by means of the greatest energy are  
 "great results obtained, and thereby also peace restored,  
 "which may God grant us after a victorious struggle."

After waiting long for my equipment and trying in  
 vain to get hold of a Staff Officer to give me a hint as  
 to what was to be done, I rode out towards evening  
 intending to get to Forbach, where I expected to find  
 the 40th, but, having left my pocket book behind, did  
 no more than show three English gentlemen, who had  
 arrived during the day, over the position held by the  
 Prussians up to the 2nd, and on returning to Guéprratte's  
 was rewarded by them with a shake-down in their  
 room, all other lodging being taken up.

About 6 a.m. on the 9th, I rode out again, expecting  
 to find the 40th at Forbach, but after ascending the  
 Spichenen heights and crossing the scene of the evening's  
 struggle, I found the regiment with the rest of the  
 Army Corps lying in a sort of cross between a camp  
 and a bivouac, for the tents which the French had  
 been kind enough to leave behind them, were being  
 freely used by their Prussian adversaries, who did not  
 otherwise possess such luxuries. Passing over the plâ-  
 teau, a place was noticeable where at least one battalion  
 must have laid down its packs, and, if I recollect  
 aright, its arms, too. It was a regular line, and about  
 where I could see one formed on the evening of the  
 6th. Anyhow there was an enormous number of chasse-

pôts lying about. The work of burying had gone on well, for I don't remember seeing many corpses still exposed. It surprised me how much the plateau generally commanded the exercise ground and ridge, but I have already alluded to the fact in my attempt to describe the position.

The scene looking up the slope towards Eslingen, on which the piles of arms and the Artillery packs stood, was very cheerful; many Saarbrückeners were out seeing their friends; two chaplains, one of each persuasion, were holding Divine service successively, on each regiment's ground, their bands helping the singing very prettily; cattle of sorts were moving about decorated with trophies, the oxen generally wearing chacos; and there was plenty of good Rhenish going amongst the Officers. Count Gneisenau, whom I had not seen since the 2nd, was so kind as to offer me a share of quarters in a village near, but I had already accepted Rosen's invitation to his *tente d'abris*. The latter was now in command of the 1st Battalion, whose Major had been wounded on the 6th. The singing of the men towards and after dark was beautiful; the night was colder but comfortable.

Before turning in, however, there was, as may well be supposed, plenty of talk over the events of the 6th. One point under discussion was whether the affair was to be dignified as a battle, or known merely under the name of a combat. The fighting had been severe enough—the loss of the regiment amounted to: killed, 3 Officers and 58 men, wounded 24 Officers and 312 men, missing 101 men—and although it may be considered that there was no necessity for attacking, as a part of the Prussian plan of operations, this particular French Corps, the results were enormous, and had more influence on the future conduct of the campaign than if Frossard had been driven back merely into line with the three corps in his direct and left rear. Not only were the losses in men and material great,<sup>1</sup> but most accounts

<sup>1</sup> Killed and wounded estimated by "*l'officier, etc.*," at between 3,000 and 4,000. The number of prisoners taken up to the 9th, exceeded 2,000, and a French correspondent soon after estimates the 2nd Corps as perhaps not more than 25,000 strong. The captured camp was

agree that this corps required the shelter of Metz, to enable its reorganization to be effected.<sup>1</sup> Moreover it was the news of this reverse, as well as of Mac-Mahon's defeat on the same day, which caused Napoleon when telegraphing from the fortress at midnight on the 7th, to come down already to the phrase "*Tout peut se rétablir.*"

The conduct of the French troops during the engagement was also commented on, and here as well as on other occasions, I found the Prussian Officers generally more inclined to give their enemies credit for individually behaving well, than I have ever felt in my own mind ready to allow. Most who had served the Campaign of '66, while they remarked strongly on the wild, aimless shooting of the French, yet were of opinion that it was harder work to gain ground against them, than it was against the Austrians. Of course having been throughout the action at too great a distance from what may perhaps be called the points of contact of the two combatants, to observe personally the bearing of individuals on the other side, I must submit the reasons which cause me to doubt the presence of much valour amongst the French ranks, with diffidence and as liable to disproof. The incapacity or apathy of the Chiefs down to most Divisional Generals can hardly be disputed. But how about subordinate leaders from Brigadiers down to Corporals? Without searching for examples in history, or appealing to the recollections of men who have served, for instances of opportunities snatched and turned to account by subordinates, ending in important

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made out to be that of two divisions, besides which a Pontoon train of about 40 carts and stores of all sorts fell into Prussian hands.

<sup>1</sup> It is true that a letter written to the "*Gaulois*," by M. Wachter, retired Captain of the French Staff, describes Frossard's Corps as retiring in good order, and the troops generally at St. Avold, on the 7th, as animated by the most lively enthusiasm, and by resolution the most energetic, but apart from the fact that the use of such terms in a French account afford *prima facie* evidence of untrustworthiness, the writer may have been carried away by his evident wish to help in restoring confidence in Paris. He shows a confusion of ideas when describing (unless there be a misprint), Frossard's Corps as being perfectly covered in its retreat by the 2nd, and the contrary statement of "*L'officier, etc.*" that the retreat became a rout, derives strength from the fact that so many prisoners were captured by the Prussian Cavalry.

victorious results, I may assume that anyone whose military experience goes as far as taking part in a cross-country field-day, must remember how often bodies of troops from brigades down to sections of companies have been left without orders, and after very little reflection be able to say what he or his Commander would have done had the work been real; what position he would have tried to seize; how he would have, on his own judgment, attacked or received the attack of a visible enemy, and whether he would not have followed up any advantage gained. Now I have entirely failed in my object if I have not conveyed to my readers some idea how, after having been once sent into action with points of attack more or less definitely indicated, the success of the Prussian troops in this fight depended mainly on the conduct of leaders of companies or still smaller bodies, and how such leaders, whether Brigadiers or second Lieutenants, had to act almost entirely on their own judgment. The same state of things must have existed, though probably not to the same extent, throughout the French force, especially if it be true that their General held aloof till three in the afternoon. Granting that the Army Corps was acting strictly on the defensive, even preparing for a retreat, nay more, that such things as instructions had been issued to Commanders for their guidance in case of attack limiting their operations to holding the position, it must yet be remembered that it is a rule for besieged troops when successful in repelling an assault, to follow the retiring stormers into their trenches, destroy their cover, and disable their ordnance; it must be known also, that previously to anything taking place between the two armies more serious than outpost skirmishes, small books of instruction were in circulation amongst the French troops, directing them how to receive the attack of the Prussians, to keep on the defence till these should by the chassépôt fire have their ranks thinned or be thrown into confusion, but then to rush forward and charge;<sup>1</sup> and there must be considered the advantage

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<sup>1</sup> Several of these little books, published for the campaign, were found on deserters and prisoners brought into Saarbrücken previously to the 2nd.

Frossard's Corps possessed up to at least 3 p.m., as regards numbers, knowledge, and power of observation over the ground. To explain the two last sources of superiority, attention is called to the fact that, besides the opportunities given by the ten days of outpost work, the Officers of at least one division must have been able for three days to study all the approaches to and from Saarbrücken, and that though the Köllerthaler and Bavarian forests may have filled the French with feeling akin to that one sometimes has in India at the edge of a wood possibly occupied by an unseen tiger, the before alluded to command of the Spicheren height should have enabled them to observe all troops entering St. Johann or Malstatt from the north, while the possession of the St. Arnual wood should have given the same power of watching any line of advance from the Palatinate. Until, then, we have some better explanation of the conduct of the French troops on the day in question, than I have come across, I feel inclined to maintain, that, if up to between three and four in the afternoon, more particularly at the time when part of the 27th Prussian Brigade was struggling up and on the Spicheren height, there had been on the plateau above, a single Brigade, Regimental, or Battalion Commander worth his salt, with men to follow, a rush would have been made with the result of either capturing the entire 14th Division, or of throwing it back into Saarbrücken in such wise as to have blocked the lines of advance of the 3rd and 8th Corps. True that the Cavalry of Rheinbaben would have been encountered in the amphitheatre, but these could have done little against determined Infantry and Artillery, and would have greatly increased the block. Besides there were at least three Brigades of French Cavalry somewhere, though I do not remember seeing one of their troopers all day. While holding the above opinion, I must acknowledge that the idea I at first entertained, that the Regimental Officers of the French Army had been distinguished for excessive care of their persons on this occasion, has been dispelled by the casualty list of Laveaucoupet's Division given by "*l'officier, etc.*," which shews 163 killed and wounded of the commissioned

ranks against 1800 of the Non-Commissioned, rank and file, a proportion of Officers to men slightly greater than what fell in the 40th, and nearly double of that in the 77th Prussian Regiment.<sup>1</sup>

The movements of troops since the 6th I must now try and give, though I can promise no certainty, except as to those of the Prussian 8th Corps. But first those of the French troops. Frossard's Corps (2nd) it seems reached Saargemünd about 10 a.m. on the 7th, having passed through Blittersdorf, and in the afternoon resumed its march, changing direction however, to the right, to join Bazaine's at Puttrelange, which it reached in the evening. That Marshal's (3rd) Corps had concentrated at the last-named place, the Guard moved up from Courcelles to St. Avold, but l'Admirault's (the 4th) retired from Boulay to les Etangs. On the Prussian side I believe there was little movement by the three corps, which for the time were in first line, but the 5th Cavalry Division kept feeling forwards, and part of it occupied Sargemünd. The great results of the minor of the two victories of the day before, were not yet known, and this fact probably caused the change of orders for the 1st Army. Thus at 9.30 p.m., orders were received by the 8th Corps to move next day to Völklingen, and occupy both banks of the Saar in that neighbourhood, dictated probably with the view of making way in line for the Corps of the 2nd Army coming up, for the 7th Corps was also directed to take ground to the right as far as Ludweiler. At 5.30 a.m. on the 8th, however, conjecturably in order to face the concentration at Puttrelange, counter-orders were received for the 8th Corps to take position: the 15th Division north of, and the 16th south of the village of Spicheren, with an advanced guard at Gaubivinch, the Reserve Artillery coming across the Saar to the Galgenberg. The 7th and 3rd Corps were, I believe, on either flank in the neighbourhood of Forbach and Blittersdorf respectively, while the bulk of the 2nd Army (3 Corps) was

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix referring to General Frossard's report.



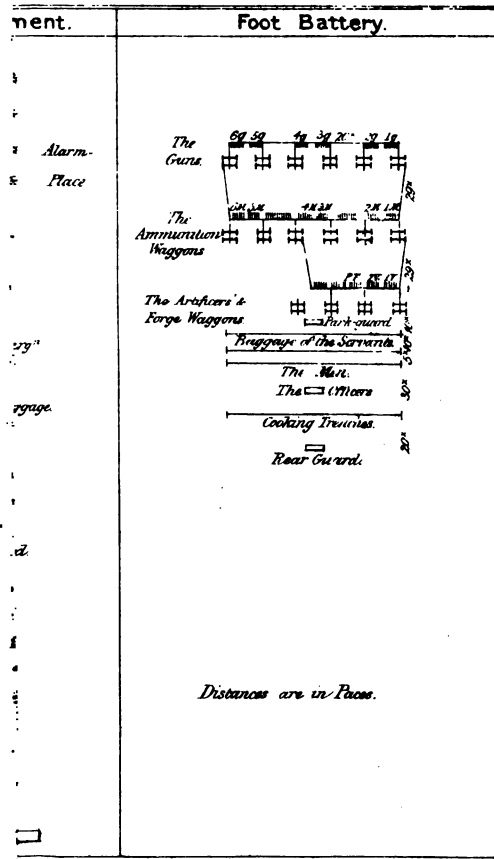
the arms of a Prussian battalion are piled in the "attack-column" formation;<sup>1</sup> the men of the two centre companies lie down on the flanks, and those of the two flank companies in rear. Battalions, as I observed, usually marched off by double files from the centre, therefore neither flank was named as a pivot. Parties were at once sent off for wood and water, and brought in the former in abundance, but the latter rather scarcely. More than once during these few days I was happy to get a cup of water wherewithal to wash my hands and then give my face a dry polish. On the line of march Rosen gave me a hint that provisions would not be over plentiful, but that he could not fall out, so I managed to get butter, eggs, and a goose out of a village, and the two Surgeons, who with the Acting Adjutant (the permanent one had been severely wounded on the Spicheren) completed the battalion staff, were soon hard at work dissecting. The soup was good, but the prospects for the night, on rain beginning to fall and no baggage cart coming up, looked bad. The men rigged up plenty of picturesque bowers, in one of which, with five others, I obtained a lodging, being shown to the place of honour which turned out not to be the place of comfort, for it was under a leak through which a stream began in the middle of the night to trickle down the back of my neck, and it was impossible to move without disturbing everyone else. Some battalions of the Army Corps were worse off, not reaching their ground till 6 p.m., and thereby had difficulty in getting their men fed. The subsistence was drawn from Saarlouis; two of the provision columns had been told off to each division, and one to the Reserve Artillery. The necessary wood was levied by requisition from the villages, the receipts being discharged by the military chest.

The cavalry in front this day had crossed the line extending north-west from Saar-union by Gross Tenquin, Faulquemont, and Fouligny, to les Etangs, while the division on the right flank was at Ueberherrn on the frontier. Of the French, three corps

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<sup>1</sup> Described in the Plan of a Bivouac opposite this page.

# REGIMENT OF CAVALRY, AND A FOOT BATTERY



Mitchell & Co. 39, Charing Cross.

nained halted, while the 2nd got under shelter of  
 Metz forts between Ars and Mercy. The Army  
 reinforced by the 6th—Canrobert's Corps of four  
 Infantry Divisions—moved up by rail from Châlons.<sup>1</sup> On  
 the 11th, the 2nd Corps retired within Fort Queuleu,  
 the 3rd to Grigy, and the Guard to Borny; the five  
 Corps of the so-called Army of the Rhine being  
 thus united under shelter. I cannot find, in any  
 French account, notice of a previous design to hold  
 a line of the French Nied,<sup>2</sup> though a Prussian  
 telegram of the 12th mentions that a position on  
 that stream had been prepared for defence.

The 11th was a halting day for at least the 8th  
 Prussian Corps, now in 2nd line of the 1st Army,  
 the head-quarters of which were in the village close  
 by. I cannot give the exact positions of the 1st  
 and 7th Corps, but I believe that they were close  
 to our right and left front, also that the 9th Corps  
 formed the right of the 1st line of the 2nd  
 Army.

A small magazine was established at Ludweiler,  
 hence the troops drew their provisions on country  
 routes. It may be here observed that the rules for  
 feeding the Army during this campaign, seem to  
 have recognized four modes of supply, none of which  
 at the first was to be resorted to, unless that  
 immediately preceding it in order was exhausted:  
 (1st) victualling by the inhabitants, on whom the  
 soldiers were billeted, or in cases when it was  
 necessary to keep the troops concentrated in bivouacs,  
 requisitions on the neighbouring villages; (2nd) draw-  
 ing from fixed magazines; (3rd) from the Provision  
 Columns; lastly, the three days' "Iron portion,"  
 carried by the men, and invariably replenished as  
 far as possible, after having been once made use of  
 in the smallest part.

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<sup>1</sup> Three of the Infantry Regiments and the Cavalry Divisions  
 led to reach Metz, and retired on Châlons.—"*Officier de l'armée  
 Rhin.*"

<sup>2</sup> Two arms of the small river of that name, previously to their  
 affluence at Notten, east of Metz, bear the name of the German  
 and French Nied respectively.

The orders for the Corps that evening were at first to march next day to Teterchen, and to send an advanced guard to Bettange, but were countermanded some hours afterwards, and the following disposition was then directed:—Head-quarters to Oberwisse, 16th Division to Bisten-im-Loch, 15th and Reserve Artillery to Buschborn; supply columns at two stages in rear, the second being on this, as well as on most marching days, at the former halting ground.

During the day the weather cleared, and we got dry in the sun, but the potato field on which we bivouacked remained unpleasantly wet.

On the 12th the division marched off about 8 a.m., crossing the frontier and under the unfinished Thionville railway near Carling, then skirting the St. Avold forest through beautifully wooded but somewhat swampy country to Bisten-im-Loch, where we came on the rear guard of part of the 1st Army Corps. Gustavus having somewhat recovered, I rode with the Colonel Commanding the Artillery Detachment of the Division, and reached Niederwisse about noon, the 40th not coming up till 2 p.m. From this ground, the country being open and undulating, a front view was to be had for some distance, including the bivouacs of other divisions, (those of the 1st Corps I believe) half-right. As the troops arrived, sentries were at once placed to prevent foraging, except by regularly sent parties, and plundering; particular villages were notified, on which each body of troops was to levy requisitions. Food came late; the night was cold but pleasant. The doctor told me, though, that his list was increasing in consequence of the effects on the men of sleeping on wet ground.

The rouse went at six next morning, and I at once joined the advanced guard. There was some bother about selecting the best roads, and avoiding getting clubbed with detachments of the 1st Army Corps crossing our front. Hearing Varize, no distance off, named as the point of direction, I took my way alone, looking in at one or two villages I passed. In one they spoke German, in another French. By

the bye apropos of this subject, I may mention that passing through Metz earlier that summer, I was much surprised by hearing German preached in the cathedral. Foraging in Varize, where I got some chickens and wine, I met a small party of the Zieten Hussars, whose uniform it may be known is red. They had come from the 3rd Army Corps, and were commanded by an English Fähnrich, whose brother in the Baden Service had fallen in the first reconnaissance made into Alsace. On the 40th coming up, the 1st Battalion halted short of the village while the other two with Regimental Staff moved on to a village a little further west. I learned that by riding off so early I had missed hearing the King's thanks communicated to the regiment by General von Goeben.

The distribution of the Corps this day (13th) was: head-quarters and 15th Division at Bionville, 16th at Helstroff, Reserve Artillery at Brouck, all supplies at Narbéfontaine. It was considered safe to billet the troops in the above-named and adjoining villages. The 7th Corps, I believe, stood on the left front, with the 1st Cavalry Division on a further echelon, both near the Railway, and feeling towards Fort Queuleu. The 1st Corps was to the right-front, with its outer flank across the Boulay-Metz road, and part of its advanced guard had feeling with that of the 3rd Cavalry Division at St. Barbe. The last-named duty fell this day to the 7th Lancers, and as I have since learnt from their Officers, the regiment marched at 5 a.m. out of Bettange, by Vry and Avancy, to the plateau of St. Barbe, on which fire from Infantry posted under cover in the village of Vrémy, stopped its further advance. From the regiment, therefore, established at Avancy, outposts were thrown out on the line—St. Barbe-Vigy. A squadron was also detached to the right flank, to look out for comers from Thionville. Patrols went out, of course, in the usual dashing way. One of these sent to the flank, came under the fire of the above fortress, and I am not sure that its leader, determined not to lose anything for want of asking, did not invite the

Commandant to surrender. Another crossed the Moselle at Hauconcourt, and advanced a short way without seeing anything of the enemy. Those moving in front came constantly under fire, but succeeded in making out a large camp standing beyond Vrémy towards Metz.

Towards the centre of the German line, I believe that the 5th Cavalry Division took possession of Pont à Mousson, and pushed a Hussar Regiment across the Moselle towards the Metz-Verdun road as far as Thiancourt. Part of the 10th Corps, supporting the advanced guard, also came up to the same point of passage over the Moselle.

Bazaine was now in command of the so-called Armée-du-Rhin, the Emperor having some days previously renounced the personal lead, and Marshal Lebœuf having resigned his functions as Major-General, the title given by the French to the office analogous to that of the Prussian Chief of the Great General Staff. The position of the troops on the night of the 13th are given by the "*l'Officier, &c.*," as follows: The 6th Corps—Canrobert's—estimated at the time by the correspondent of a Paris paper at 45,000 men—south of the fortress in the angle formed by the railways to Pont à Mousson and Forbach, in front of St. Privat<sup>1</sup>, the left wing along the left bank of the Seille; the 2nd Corps—minus, I suppose, the Division of Laveaucoupet, told off to garrison the forts, and, therefore, about 17,000 strong—in front of fort Queulen from Mercy-le-haut to Ars Laquenexy; the 3rd Corps—now Decaen's, estimated at 45,000—north of Ars Laquenexy by Colombey to Ventoux; the 4th Corps, said to be 36,000 men, occupied the ground between the last and the Moselle, in front of Fort St. Julien; as reserve stood the Guard valued at 35,000—behind the village of Borny. The front formed something like the arc of a circle having as cord between five and six miles' course of the Moselle, across which there are three permanent bridges—the railway one, and two within the fortress, besides which were, I believe, thrown four<sup>2</sup> pontoon bridges for the nonce.

<sup>1</sup> Not to be mistaken for the celebrated village of that name on the left bank.

<sup>2</sup> Exclusive of those over the smaller arms corresponding to the bridges across the main stream.

I have some recollection of having in my boyhood read a saying quoted as coming from the Duke of Wellington, that he did not know of an English General who could get 50,000 men out of Hyde Park, but I do not remember that baggage in proportion was supposed to accompany them. Here, after having accomplished the concentration, from which great results were promised to the Parisians, the French Marshal set himself the task of extricating these, some 180,000 men from the inclosure, into which he or his predecessor had penned them, by seven narrow outlets converging on two hilly and steep lines of road, and of marching them on a point which he desired to reach before his adversary, whose advanced guard was not further from it than himself. And yet not only had he neglected to destroy the bridges along his enemy's front, but he does not appear to have taken the very ordinary precaution of sending on the baggage, or if too late for that, of pitching it into the Moselle.

A field telegraph detachment made its appearance as I was lounging about Varize, and commenced laying a line, but I do not remember between what points, nor have I ascertained that it was at all used in directing the movements of corps or divisions during these few days. The 1-40th presently moved into quarters in the village of Helstroff, where I rejoined them after riding a short distance in the direction of Metz, though not so far as the outposts. The head-quarters of the division and a battery or two were in the same village. Rosen's quarters were in the house of a couple, of which the lord was a voluble Frenchman, while the lady resembled in manners, as well as language, a German housewife. For our amusement were produced some Metz journals, one of which contained General Frossard's pretty despatch of the 2nd. Not being aware of the care with which a certain young gentleman with his papa had been withdrawn from the neighbourhood of mitrailleuses, we were anxious to know if the former had liked being confirmed on the 6th as well as being baptized on the 2nd.

Here the notes I kept from the commencement end, for various circumstances prevented my continuing them during the important week which followed. Therefore

my description of the impression made on me by the stirring scenes I was then able to witness, may be much more meagre than I could wish.

On the 14th, which was pretty nearly a halt for the 8th Army Corps, I was prevented from carrying out my intention of riding as far as the outposts towards Metz, and perhaps from witnessing the fight by a violent recurrence of certain attacks I have been periodically liable to since a severe injury received in India some years ago. The information that a registered letter from England was seeking me amongst the field post-offices, and the consequent anxiety as to what its contents might be, did not help to re-invigorate me, but still I was well enough to accompany the battalion when it turned out about 7 p.m. to march thither, whence the thunder of cannon was to be heard. Passing Varize and reaching the high-road from Boulay to Metz, we were met by news that the services of the brigade were not required, and that the troops might return to their quarters.

During the day some sick were sent back to Saarlouis, and amongst them my youngster Frederic, whose bowels had lost their tone.

The important movements of the day seem to have been as follows: On the French side, agreeably to the decision arrived at on the 13th, to attempt a junction with MacMahon at Châlons, using Verdun as an intermediate stage, so much of the 2nd Corps as was still to keep in the field commenced its march at 3 a.m., but in consequence of the block in the streets and suburbs of Metz, caused not only by the military baggage, said to have been of an inordinate extent, but by the number of private vehicles carrying flying inhabitants, the troops failed that night to get beyond Moulins, just short of the ascent to Point du Jour. Seven brigades of the 3rd Corps were already on the march, taking one of the roads<sup>1</sup> towards Brie, and

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<sup>1</sup> I have stated that there are only two lines of road leading out of Metz to Verdun, meaning that there are only two, which neither commence as one, nor commencing separately, converge afterwards into one.



the last was about following when attacked on the right bank by the advanced guards of the Prussian 1st and 7th Corps. I do not know the exact position of the former of these two, but believe it stood à cheval on the Saarlouis road somewhat east of the meridian of St. Barbe. The latter according to an account, given as official,<sup>1</sup> occupied with one division Pange and neighbourhood, with the other Domangeville.

In the morning, patrols from the 7th Lancers on the extreme right came under French fire and lost some horses. Towards mid-day within the enemy's lines were observed great movements, which looked like the prelude to an advance on St. Barbe. Towards 4 p.m., the Commander of the advanced guard of the 7th Corps made out that the French were retiring on Metz, and sent in word that he would attack them. By 4.30 his troops, composed mainly of the 26th Brigade, were hotly engaged insomuch that the remainder of the 13th Division had to be sent for from Pange. The Corps-Commander about the same time ordered the 14th Division to move from Domangeville on Laquenexy, followed by the Reserve Artillery from Bazoncourt. The 26th Brigade appears to have seized the village of Colombey—whether the same had been previously occupied by the French, the account quoted does not say—and to have had hard work in holding it until re-inforced by the 25th, towards 6 p.m., when a wood to the north of the village was also attacked, while the Divisional Artillery unlimbered on a height east of Colombey. Still little ground was gained, and after 6 the Division, of which all the battalions had been brought into action, was obliged to confine itself to the defensive. About 6.50 the 14th Division began to arrive, when, the 27th Brigade being kept in reserve, the 28th attacked the enemy's right flank near Colombey, and drove him back on Borny, obtaining possession of the wood south-east of the same; while the 25th Brigade succeeded in gaining that to the north already attacked. Firing is described as having ceased as darkness set in, about 8.30 p.m. The troops

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<sup>1</sup> In the April-May, 1871, number of the *Militärische Blätter*, edited by G. von Glassenapp, Berlin.

were ordered to bivouac, without piling arms, on the ground they had won, and at daylight to withdraw on La Planchette, Colombey, and Ars Laquenexy. Notwithstanding that an order was received at 11 p.m., from 1st Army head-quarters, to retire on Pange-Domangeville, the previous disposition was adhered to in order to allow of the numerous wounded being carried off.

I have not come across any account of the 1st Corps operations more detailed than that sent next day, from the King's head-quarters, but from it and from what I have learnt from the 7th Lancers I make out that both General von Manteuffel's and Count von der Groeben's troops came into action about the same time as those of General von Zastrow, and that the infantry pressed forward till under fire of the forts, and as far as Bellecroix. The nature of the action was not such as to give much opportunity for cavalry to work, except in the way of observation. From the 9th Corps (right of the 2nd Army), the 18th Division is described as coming into action on the left of the 7th Corps, but at what point as to time or place is not mentioned. Some historians have it that part of the 8th Corps also shared in the fight, but not more than the 32nd Brigade was set in motion for that purpose, and the latter advanced no further than I have described. The 31st Brigade, with a squadron of Hussars and a battery, had been detached with a view of attempting a coup-de-main against Thionville. About 7.30 p.m., word came to Corps head-quarters at Bionville, from General von Steinmetz, that he had sent for the 32nd Brigade, and orders for the 15th Division and Reserve Artillery, to cross the German Nied, and advance towards the scene of action, but General von Goeben in the exercise of his discretion, postponed execution of the instructions till daylight, so as to arrive with his troops fresh, and before morning he received counter-orders.

The effect of the Prussian operations on the 14th was to put a stop for the day to the French retreat and to bring back to the right bank of the Moselle their 3rd Corps, which had, with the 2nd, commenced the movement on Verdun. My authority from that side states

that neither the Guard nor the 6th Corps, although in position, took a share in the action.

Next morning, starting about the usual hour, I rode with the advanced guard along the Boulay-Metz road as far as Petit Marais, whence the column changed direction to the left and marched about parallel to the Moselle, as far as Courcelles, on the French Nied. From the former point, where a view of the Metz Cathedral is to be had, I continued along the high road till I came on an outpost of Dragoons, just on the edge of the previous evening's combat, and within sight of the forts on the right bank. Thence an Infantry Officer would not be denied the pleasure of shewing me over the field, for which I had no inclination, such scenes affording little pleasure immediately after the excitement is over, though of course information is to be got as to the forces engaged by noting the numbers on the relics lying about. My would-be conductor, too, was not easy to understand, so I managed to elude him, and leaving him shouting "Come Englishman" as he rode west, I made my way N.E., conducted by the Dragoon the Officer of the picquet had been so kind as to give me, to the next outpost, which was furnished by my old Saarbrücken friends, the 7th Lancers. After a little talk with the officers, I returned to the track of the column southwards, and falling in with an Englishman *en route*, meeting also with no further bother than that a young Cavalry Officer would not make up his mind to call on me to legitimize myself until I had passed him over a quarter of a mile, found the 40th established in bivouac, and united again in brigade with the 72nd. This flank march was shared in by the rest of the 8th Army Corps, except the detached 31st Brigade, and brought the head-quarters to Chérissey; the 15th Division to Liehon, Buchy, Haute, and Basse Beu; the half 16th to Chesny and rear, and the Reserve Artillery to Mécleuves and Orny. This distribution was given out in the 4th order issued that day to the 8th Corps for the guidance of its march. The first had been received from the 1st Army head-quarters at 2.30 a.m., directing the divisions on Aube and Bazancourt, but about 8 came the second, ordering the 15th to Pont-à-

Chaussy by Courcelles, the Reserve Artillery in rear thereof, and the half 16th to Les Etangs and Petit Marais. It is well known that the King of Prussia that day rode over the field of Borny, and met there the Commanders of the 1st Army and component corps. It seems that from there nothing could be made out of the French movements, and that therefore the whole 1st Army was ordered (3rd), to halt. By this time the columns of the 8th Corps were just reaching the assigned ground, which brought them, however, too close on the 1st and 7th to allow of their all moving without a block taking place. General von Goeben, therefore, obtained permission to bring his corps up into first line to the left of the 7th, but had some difficulty in finding room, as much of the ground in that direction had already been assigned to the 9th Corps. In consequence, therefore, of lateness in reaching their bivouacs, by troops and supply columns, some requisitions were inadequate or impossible, and drawing on the commissariat was out of the question, so that in many cases the "Iron Ration" had to be made use of. I don't remember what I got to eat, but it could not have been much, and I don't think we had the little tents.

According to the account purporting to be official, from which I have before quoted,<sup>1</sup> the position of the 2nd Army that morning had been as follows: 3rd Corps at Cheminot and Vigny; 6th Cavalry Division feeling forwards towards Metz; 9th Corps at Buchy; 12th at Solgne; 10th at Pont-à-Mousson, with advanced guard westward on the left bank; 5th Cavalry Division at Thiancourt and forward towards the Verdun road; Guards at Dieulouard, with advanced guard at Quatre-Vents; 4th Corps between Marbach and the Seille; and the 2nd at Hann on the Nied. Prince Frederic Charles's head-quarters were at Pont-à-Mousson.

To meet the event of another action taking place between the French and the 1st Prussian Army, it was at first thought advisable to keep three corps of the 2nd Army on the right bank, but as it soon appeared that Bazaine was commencing a march westwards with

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<sup>1</sup> Published in Glasenapp's *Militärische Blätter*, Vol. 24.

the bulk of his troops, orders were issued at 7 a.m. for the 5th Cavalry Division, reinforced by a Brigade of Dragoons of the Guard from Rogéville, to prosecute the advance towards the great road, and for part of the 10th Corps to be pushed forward to Thiancourt in support. The latter Corps was also directed to push reconnaissances along the left bank towards Metz. At 2 p.m., instructions were issued for the 3rd Corps to cross the river by a bridge thrown at Champey, and to advance next day by Gorze, on Mars-la-Tour; the 12th to advance on Nomény.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ACTION CALLED INDIFFERENTLY OF MARS-LA-TOUR, VIONVILLE, OR REZONVILLE.

DISPOSITIONS for the movements of the 2nd Army on the 16th were given out at Pont-à-Mousson, at 7 p.m., as follows :

"The 3rd Army-Corps, and the 6th Cavalry Division, "cross the Moselle below Pont-à-Mousson, and moving "by Novéant and Gorze, gain the Metz-Verdun road near "Mars-la-Tour and Vionville ;

"The 10th Army Corps and the 5th Cavalry Division "continue the advance on the Verdun road, about as "far as St. Hilaire and Maizeray ;

"The 12th Army Corps marches from Nomény to "Pont-à-Mousson with its advanced guard as far as "Regnéville-en-Haye ;

"The Guards to Bernécourt with advanced guard as "far as Rambucourt ;

"The 4th Army Corps to les Saizerais and Marbaché, "with advanced guard to Jaillon, on the Toul road ;

"The 9th Army Corps to Sillegny, so as to follow, on "the 17th, the 3rd Corps across the Moselle and "Gorze ;

"The 2nd Army Corps marches with its head as far as "Buchy, and is to commence the passage of the Moselle "at Pont-à-Mousson, on the 17th.

"Army head-quarters remain at Pont-à-Mousson."

Intimation received later from the King's head-quarters at Herny, that two corps of the 1st Army were to be established next day on the line Arry-Pommerieux, caused instructions to be sent to the 9th Corps for it to continue its march so as to cross the Moselle and

keep closed up to the 3rd Corps in its advance on Mars-la-Tour.

The 3rd Corps accomplished its passage on the evening of the 15th. The 5th Infantry and the 6th Cavalry Divisions by the permanent bridge of Novéant; the 6th Infantry Division by that thrown across at Champey; and the Reserve Artillery at Pont-à-Mousson. Heads of columns reached Gorze and Onville between midnight and 3 a.m. on the 16th. Lieutenant General von Alvensleben, the Corps Commander's orders for the 16th were that the left column should commence the march on Mars-la-Tour at 5 a.m.; that the cavalry of the right column should be in motion on the left bank, against Vionville, by 5.30, and be followed by the infantry.

Patrols soon reported that the enemy's outposts stood at Tronville and Vionville, and that further in rear was a large display of tents. The General decided on an attack, and sent orders for the 6th Infantry Division to continue its march to the plateau, and there to await under cover the arrival of the 6th Cavalry Division. A second report, received about 8 a.m., caused it to be suspected that the enemy was marching off to the north. Therefore, and in order to disturb his retreat, the 6th Infantry Division was directed on Mars-la-Tour and Jarny. At 9 a.m., the 6th Cavalry Division had reached the plateau and driven in the enemy's vedettes.

The French movements, after the engagement of the 14th, appear to have been as follows: The Marshal Commanding-in-Chief directed all his corps by the same line of route as far as Gravelotte,<sup>1</sup> the 2nd in particular to continue its march, notwithstanding the events of the 14th. That corps accordingly made its way through the crush, but could not get the same night further than the neighbourhood of Rozerieulles, and the cavalry division which was to lead the column

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<sup>1</sup> So says General Frossard, also that General Ladmirault, on his own responsibility, directed two of his divisions by the Brier road. "*L'Officier, etc.*" merely mentions that the 2nd, 6th, and Guard Corps followed the Gravelotte road; the 3rd and 4th moving north of Fort St. Quentin.

could not take its place in front till the following morning. On the 15th the 2nd, followed by the 6th Corps, with the front cleared by General Forton's Cavalry, continued its march, and would have reached Mars-la-Tour that evening had not the Commander-in-Chief ordered both Corps to halt at Rézonville, to await the others, delayed by the jam, in getting out of Metz. The two corps encamped for the night *à cheval* on the Verdun road, but with a brigade facing the defiles and woods leading down to the Moselle. The Cavalry of the 2nd Corps was pushed forward as far as Vionville, to cover the left front and communicate with that of General Forton, who had advanced to about Mars-la-Tour, and got engaged with some of Rheinbaben's Cavalry.

The Imperial Guard, with the Marshal's head-quarters, came to Gravelotte. The 3rd Corps, marching between Fort St. Quentin and Plappeville, advanced to between Verneville and St. Marcel. The 4th Corps encamped a little in advance of Woippy. These two were to follow the northern road from Gravelotte to Verdun, their front being cleared by General du Barrail's Cavalry Division.

At 4.30 a.m. on the 16th, the two first named Corps had breakfasted, packed tents and fallen in, when an order was received from Marshal Bazaine, postponing their march until the 3rd and 4th Corps should arrive abreast of them, and allowing a re-encampment.

As the 6th Prussian Infantry Division reached Tronville, it was ordered to wheel to the right and attack. Its artillery opened the action. About the same time Lieutenant-General von Rheinbaben sent word that with the 5th Cavalry Division he would support the attack by Mars-la-Tour, and would acquaint the 10th Corps then on the march towards St. Hilaire.

The first shots from the Prussian guns seem to have reached, according to General Frossard's account, the camp of Forton's Cavalry Division, and together with the display of cavalry and infantry from Tronville to north of Mars-la-Tour, to have caused that division to retire and leave the front of the 2nd French Corps uncovered. The latter, therefore, turned out, and



General Bataille's Division was deployed on the various heights facing west with the right flank about Vionville. On the left the brigades of General Verge's Division seem to have formed something like the sides of a right angle, of which the side facing south was prolonged by General Lapasset's Brigade, deployed in two lines. All the Artillery is described as having been brought into action. The 6th Corps was deployed in two lines with its left on the Verdun road, and its right about St. Marcel; a division being kept in reserve.

To return to the German account. About 10.15 a.m., the 6th Infantry Division advanced against the occupied heights, carried them after hard fighting, and then obtained possession at the first rush, of the villages of Vionville and Flavigny. During this fighting the Corps Artillery was established on the high ground, with its left near Flavigny.

The 5th Infantry Division reached before 10 a.m. the plateau by the road from Gorze to Vionville, attacked the left of the French 2nd Corps, which it drove back on Rezonville after an obstinate stand, and with the assistance of a detachment of the 10th Corps, consisting of two battalions and a battery, maintained possession of the heights above the afore-named and the wood of St. Arnould.

Of the 10th Army Corps, the 37th Brigade consisting for the time of four battalions, two squadrons of Dragoons and a heavy battery, commenced its march at 4.30 a.m. from Thiancourt towards Dommartin and Chambley in order to support Rheinbabens's Cavalry and communicate with the detachment which had, as described, joined the 5th Infantry Division. The 38th Brigade, with that of Dragoons of the Guard and two batteries, marched at 5 a.m. from Thiancourt on St. Hilaire by St. Benoit-en-Woevre. The 20th Division with the Reserve Artillery started at 4.30 a.m. from Pont-à-Mousson for Beney and Thiancourt.

Rheinbaben's Cavalry Division, which had bivouacked at Xonville, having been reinforced by two riding batteries from the 10th Corps, arrived by 9.15 a.m. at a trot by Puxieux at Tronville, and placed the

four batteries in a good position west of Vionville. As the sound of artillery firing reached the columns of the 10th Corps, most of them changed direction towards the quarter whence it came. Thus the 38th Brigade, having wheeled at Chambley, and been placed by its Commander at General von Alvensleben's disposition, was directed on Tronville and came into action at 11.30 a.m.

The 6th Infantry Division was maintaining hold of Vionville, notwithstanding repeated attempts of the enemy to regain possession of it, and received assistance from the 6th Cavalry Division, which about 1 p.m. charged forwards, leaving Flavigny to the left, against battalions of the enemy near the high road. The French Infantry, however, remained unbroken and the Prussian Cavalry suffered severe loss. Whether this was the charge, which according to both Bazaine's and Frossard's reports pierced through to their staffs, compelled the former warrior to draw his sword and separated him from his Aides-de-Camp, I am not quite sure. By noon the left wing of the Prussians must have had 78 guns available, and the right wing 30, while the two French Corps, reinforced about this time to some extent from the Imperial Guard, must have had close on 200, yet the latter acknowledge that the effect of the former's ordnance was too much for them.

At what time, the Prussian account I am quoting from does not state exactly, but I presume soon after noon the 6th Division received orders to extend its line further to the north, resting its right flank on Vionville and Flavigny. For that purpose four battalions of the reinforced division plunged into the wood north of the Verdun road and encountered an obstinate resistance, which caused the fight to sway backwards and forwards. Troops of the 6th French Corps must have been here engaged. Presently came news that an enemy's corps, marching on the Conflans road, had caused its columns to change direction to the left and was on the point of ascending the plateau south of Bruville. This would seem to have been the 4th French Corps, between which and the right of the 6th the 3rd Corps was about the same time—

between 2 and 3 p.m.—coming to St. Marcel. To strengthen his left, the Commander of the Prussian 3rd Corps had only five battalions available. These were distributed—three on the western edge of the wood north of Vionville, two held in reserve south-west of that village. The result of the hard bush-fighting, during which the battalions suffered much from the enemy's artillery established near the old Roman road, was to partly dislodge the batteries and to capture a gun. A second position taken up by the French Artillery so as to threaten still more the left flank of the Prussians, caused General von Alvensleben to send at it a brigade of cavalry, the charge of which pierced through the batteries and into the centre of the enemy's infantry. Up to between 3 and 4 p.m. the Prussian Commander must have been with 31 battalions, 60 squadrons, and 108 guns, blocking the way that 180 battalions, at least 100 squadrons, and about 400 guns, wished to pass along.

At 3.30 p.m., Prince Frederic Charles arrived on the field, and soon afterwards further reinforcements from the 10th Corps began to arrive. The 20th Division with the Reserve Artillery had reached Thiancourt, and received there, at 11.30 a.m., orders to march direct to the battle-field. Their route brought them up by Xammes and Chambley, whence the Reserve Artillery trotted on towards Tronville, west of which and north of the great road the batteries took up position, facing the enemy's columns advancing from Bruville. As the infantry gradually came up about 4 p.m., 8 battalions and 2 batteries reinforced the 6th Division north of Vionville, while the remaining 3<sup>1</sup> battalions and 2 batteries were directed towards Flavigny to support the 5th Division. The 38th Brigade, leaving a battalion behind at St. Hilaire, arrived about 4 p.m., and passing through and by Mars-la-Tour, the 5 battalions with 2 companies of Sappers and 2 batteries advanced against the enemy on the heights north-east of that village. What they

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<sup>1</sup> One battalion had been left at Pont-à-Mousson and one at Thiancourt.

encountered in the way of artillery and chassépôt fire, however, obliged the brigade to fall back for re-formation on Tronville under cover of some batteries of the 10th Corps, which unlimbered east of Mars-la-Tour. So much of the 20th Division as was engaged on this flank was ordered to fall back. To relieve the infantry and artillery from the pressure on them by the following French, some charges were made against the right of these by two Dragoon regiments of the Guard, who then suffered great loss. Further to the Prussian left, a Brigade of Rheinbaben's Cavalry, consisting of a Dragoon and a Hussar regiment, charged in brilliant fashion five regiments of the Imperial Guard. The last-mentioned reinforcements received brought the strength of the Germans to 2 Army Corps with 2 Cavalry Divisions—48 battalions, about 64 squadrons and 210 guns.

The 8th Corps on the night of the 15th-16th, received news that the expedition of the 31st Brigade had failed. The orders for the 16th were that headquarters with Reserve Artillery and Pontoons should march to Lorry; 15th Division to Mareuilles and Vezon; 16th to Arry. The march of the first was much retarded in consequence of the same roads being used by the 9th Corps, which, by direction of the King, was to cross the Moselle first. Preparations were made for passage at Arry.

The 32nd Brigade marched off that morning about the usual hour. I was riding with a detachment of Hussars, one of whose Officers was predicting a grand shout from the men on again seeing their beloved Moselle, when, topping the ridge which shuts in the valley on the east, we could see Artillery smoke on the opposite side; so far, however, as that no sound of the fire was to be heard. A halt and form up took place just then, and it was generally supposed that we should be too late for anything; certainly, from what I could judge of the course the fight was taking, it appeared to be gradually drawing northwards. Getting down to the river as fast as I could, I crossed by the suspension bridge to Novéant, where a Staff Officer, evidently on the look-out for coming troops, was so friendly as to direct

me the nearest way to the scene of action. It was rather a scramble across vine-terraces, but cut off considerably more than a right angle, taking me into the high road a little east of Gorze. On it I passed much of the baggage of the 3rd Army Corps, and with this, the Judge Advocate, who shouted out, "Too late." However, I trotted on, comforted by hearing more firing, when I was stopped by a baggage-guard in charge of a Paymaster or some other confounded half-civil officer. "Legitimatize yourself." "Oh, of course," when looking for the courier bag in which were my papers and money, lo, it was absent! I was nearly dragged from my horse and closely examined, during which I added to the suspicion by stating that on the buttons of my great coat was the Latin motto of my regiment, whereas there was the English title and I rather think Madras was supposed to be somewhere in Algeria. I asked to be taken back to the Justiz-Rath, who, I said, knew me; but this was refused, and I was ordered to join a batch of French prisoners who came down the road. The situation was maddening, for the sound from above told me that a very pretty fight was still going on; I refused to join the prisoners, force was about being used, and indeed I was just threatening, with my stick, a fellow who was making a kick at me, when to my joy, a squadron of the 9th Hussars rode up, and the Captain took me on with him. Going up the valley at first along the road to Mars-la-Tour, and then turning somewhat to the right, towards Flavigny, we came on General von Alvensleben, on a high plateau, not far from the edge of the wood called by some, Bois de Vionville.

The Captain of Hussars reported himself as sent by General von Barnekow to announce that he would work up through the wood on the right of the 3rd Army Corps, and then rode off with his squadron. As the chief of the staff recognised me, I thought it better to stay there. Unfortunately, though, I could not find the excellent English linguist with whom I had become acquainted at Saarbrücken. It was about 3 p.m., and what I could see of matters was this: The Staff was fronting east towards the ravine which

runs nearly N. and S. from near Rezonville, towards Gorze. A short way half-left stood some batteries maintaining a steady duel with those of the French standing east of the ravine and on ground, which I find by one map to have a command of 124 feet over that, whereon the Prussians stood. The distance was, I should say, within 1,500 yards. Echeloned about were some company-columns of the 8th Body-Grenadier-Regiment, lying down as much as possible under cover.

I have at present no recollection of having seen more troops to our left, or of having been able to make out any distinct bodies of French. It must be remembered that I had lost my map, did not know how far round Metz I had come, and was not in the confidence of any Staff Officer who might have told me what it was all about. All looked very anxious, and it seemed to be a matter of patient waiting, giving, and receiving fire, rather than of manœuvring or even of then gaining ground. I should have liked to ride further to the left, whence messages occasionally came, but I did not care about going where I was not known, without my pass. The Artillery, with whom I passed a little while, were firing with their usual steadiness and attention. French shells came fast enough, but wildly, many exploding in the air. Several men and horses were, however, lying about, and fortunately, notwithstanding my losses, I had a bottle of wine left to distribute among such of the former as still lived; also, I was able to cover some of them with horse-cloths. If I recollect rightly, there was no field hospital yet up. Chassepôt bullets also came, but I don't quite remember whether very plentifully. By one, or by the splinter of a shell, I saw General von Alvensleben's horse struck, and he told me it was the third he had had hit under him that day. Presently Colonel Hildebrand arrived with three batteries, which Barnekow had sent up at once to the open ground, while he started what Infantry he had into the wood on the flank. As the newly-arrived guns took up ground to relieve or reinforce the already hard-worked ones of the 3rd Army Corps, a shell burst, one splinter of which disabled the Colonel's horse, and another just touched my saddle bow. Experts

may form an idea of the style of fight, when they read<sup>1</sup> the statistics I have obtained regarding this detachment.

I rather think some superior General Officer did at one time come to this part of the field. If so, it must have been Prince Frederic Charles. Longing for the arrival on our right of the 32nd Brigade, I rode from one company-column to another as far as the foremost one at a protruding angle of the wood. Their Officers knew nothing of the expected succour, which, however, seems from his report<sup>2</sup> to have been anxiously awaited by Marshal Bazaine as early as noon. They advised me not to go any further along the edge of the wood, as my French looking forage cap might bring fire upon me from any of their men who did not know me, and offered one of the lying about helmets, which, however, I did not accept, for I had no wish to give rise to another accusation of having altered my uniform. Just before it got dark, while the French fire slackened, Captain Cardinal of Barnekow's Staff brought up two Batteries of the Hesse Darmstadt Division under a Field Officer, which I accompanied as they galloped down towards the ravine. They could not do more than fire a few rounds, for it instantly became too dark to distinguish at any great distance friend from foe. A little below, however, to my great delight, I found Rosen advancing across the front from the wood with remnants of his own, the 72nd, and the 11th Regiments, and among others the Captain, who was wounded on the Spicheren. Some of the young Officers rushed up to me, grasping my hand, and asking, "How has it gone; have we won yet?" I fancy I could tell them only some part of what I have just written. What they had been doing was, as well as I can make out from the accounts given me, as follows:

As I left the 32nd Brigade on the right bank of Moselle, at a height from which the artillery smoke

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<sup>1</sup> 14 Officers, 444 men, and 376 horses, with 18 guns, came into action, in which they were present about two hours. The losses were 3 men and 29 horses killed, and 2 Officers, 46 men, and 47 horses wounded. 898 rounds were expended.

<sup>2</sup> Published at Brussels by Auguste Decq., Rue de la Madeleine, 9. I presume it to be authentic.

on the Vionville plateau was visible, the 72nd Regiment, which had been leading, was already formed up for a halt. This lasted no longer than to allow of packs being taken off and the cooking tins, in which was carried extra ammunition, being carefully covered by the men's great coats, after which the brigade continued its advance, crossed the suspension bridge, where probably General von Barnekow was told by the Staff Officer where his troops would be of most service, and passing through Gorze, took a direction due north. I have no exact account of the movements of the 72nd Regiment, but I believe that as the Brigade entered the wood, called on the map des Prêtres or of Vionville, and by children I have since spoken to on the ground, de Chesnoy, that regiment took the left, and the 40th the right. Anyhow the latter marched up through the wood (minus a company of the 1st Battalion left to escort the pontoon train of the Division) close, I believe, to the ravine coming down from Rezonville. Brigadier von Rex's order had been that the front battalion should, on gaining the open, change direction somewhat to the right, and as extreme right of the brigade try to gain the enemy's left flank. It could not have then been known that the French were showing as strong a front to South from Rezonville to Gravelotte as towards the west, from the wood in question, to St. Marcel. As he reached the outlet, Colonel von Eberstein, who led the regiment, must have appreciated something of this, for he instantly ordered a line of skirmishers to be thrown out by the 2nd Battalion, and the rising ground to be seized.<sup>1</sup> This was done at the

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<sup>1</sup> For the benefit of those who wish to study tactical details, I had better mention that the regiment entered the action in the "company-column" formation, though at first battalions marched entire. That is to say, that the "Marksmen's Zug" was formed in each company out of the third rank. The double column on the centre principle was also observed, though in consequence of the narrowness of the passage through the wood, the companies of the 2nd Battalion moved much in the same way as suggested at page 146, line 9, of our "Infantry Field Exercise" of 1870, for a battalion advancing by the flank march of fours. Thus (remember the telling off of a battalion by "Zügen") the 4th "Zug" led, then the 3rd, then the Marksmen, *i.e.*, the 6th Company from its left, followed by the 7th with the 5th Zug in front, then



double, the left coming, as I understand it, to the edge of the above-mentioned ravine, the supports occupying the border of the wood on either side of the Rezonville road, while reserve consisting of the 8th Company remained under cover until an opportunity offered for this last to take ground to the right and show a front from a projecting bit of the wood, about as far forward as the skirmishers of the battalion. Between these two stood now a previously formed line of the 8th Regiment, also extended with supports, and the detached company held the extreme right of the Prussian force until nightfall, and the contemporaneous arrival of the Hessian Infantry put a stop to the fight. It was able to pour a flanking fire into at least one of the enemy's columns of attack, which advanced to within 900 paces, but instead of pushing on, halted and opened fire on the wood, and one of its Zügen took up a position within 250 paces of the French skirmishers, whence its fire frustrated more than one attempt of these to gain the edge of the wood. The first extended skirmishers carried and held the rising ground till dark. The 6th Company, all its Officers having been hit, was brought out of action by the Feldwebel (Company Sergeant-Major). During the extension of part of the 7th Company, my Saarbrücken friend Goldschmidt was hit, when not more than 20 paces out of the wood, by three shots, one of which entered his lungs.

The movements of the 3rd Battalion I have not been able to make out even as accurately as those of the 2nd. However, two of its companies took up a position in a ravine, on the French side of the wood. While the other two occupied the edge of the same, all holding their positions till dark and exchanging a constant fire with the enemy; the between 600 and 700 strong battalion expending 4,550 rounds during the two hours and a half it was engaged. A Captain was mortally

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the 6th, then the Marksmen (who by the way are intended to be always in rear unless skirmishing), lastly the 5th and 8th in similar order. As on advancing into the open, the skirmishers had to be extended from the right and not from the centre, some inversion took place, the line being formed of the 4th, 3rd, Marksmen of the 6th Company, 5th and 6th "Zügen," the supports being the "Schützen" of the 7th and the 5th Companies.

wounded, and a Subaltern killed; 4 other Officers were wounded. The three companies of the 1st Battalion must have been led more through the centre of the wood, and I rather think both crossed and re-crossed the great ravine. After having with difficulty under the heavy fire, got some sort of cover, whence to work against the enemy with some effect, Rosen pushed forward with two companies in broken order, with men of the 72nd joining, towards a white house which stands alone on the open ground between the wood and Rezonville, and which any tourist can easily identify. Charging this, the Hohenzollerns succeeded in making some prisoners, but two French columns, one of which from the guard, advancing close up and pouring in a heavy fire partly on their front, partly on their flank, compelled this detachment to retire, not without losing, in their turn, some prisoners, to a position left of the ravine, where also was the 3rd Company. Soon after this, the advancing enemy's columns appearing too strong to hold out against, Rosen rode back till he met a battalion of the 11th Regiment,<sup>1</sup> which he directed against the ravine, so that the French were repulsed for a time. They brought, however, a fresh brigade into this part of the fight, before which both the battalion of the 11th and the men of the 32nd Brigade began to give way. Rosen, who was the only mounted Officer on the spot, rode back again to try and get support, but presently found that a fresh battalion having attacked the enemy (from the right I believe), there was less pressure on the ravine, and returning, found that the 11th Battalion was again advancing. Both the immediate and the regimental Commander of the latter had fallen. Rosen then collected all the men of the three regiments about, with the help of his two Captains, Worgitzky and Lütke, was joined also by some Officers and men of the 2nd Battalion, making altogether

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<sup>1</sup> This regiment, belonging to the 9th Army Corps, was in the neighbourhood of Gorze or Novéant about the time that General von Barnekow and Staff were beating about for reinforcements to push forward in support of the 32nd Brigade. At first, I believe, the General did not like to order the regiment into action, for fear of disturbing other arrangements, but the Colonel at once placed himself at the disposal of the Commander of the 16th Division.

about the strength of two companies, and at the time the Hessian Batteries came down from the left, was making a stand, among other objects to cover the carrying back the severely wounded Colonel of the 11th. The batteries withdrew, as I learn from a published report of the Commander, towards Flavigny, and then to the position where the batteries of the 3rd and 8th Corps had stood. Rosen's mixed detachment pushed on till, notwithstanding the dusk, we could see the Verdun road a little west of Rezonville. Between that and us, however, stood a heavy-looking mass of infantry, as to which opinions varied whether they were friends or foes. My idea of the general front being to east made me think they might be Prussians coming from the left, while Rosen, who had been working from the south, and meeting opposition from the north, felt pretty confident that they were French; still, as others with him expressed doubts, he did not like to give fire, until, by sending out a few feelers, who were directed to get near enough to hear what language was spoken, all possibility of a mistake should be removed. Meanwhile, down came a body of cavalry—I think they were Hussars, but in no great force—from the left parallel to the high road, and charged close up to the infantry without breaking their ranks, then wheeled about and returned, receiving some fire. The direction they came from made it look as if they were Prussians, but it was too dark to make sure, and then as we heard "Qui vive"? shouted from the infantry mass, to the feelers, too late to do any good, I thought it rather an uncomfortable situation, for I could not make out any Prussians on the east side of the ravine, from which it struck me had come the best part of the enemy's fire, when I was further off with the artillery. As the feelers came back, the French Infantry became cloaked with night, and bugling and shouting commenced, particularly towards north-east. I cannot tell whether the mass had seen us. It was big enough to have eaten us up. The order now being for the 32nd Brigade to assemble and bivouac on the open ground just north of Gorze, called Côte Moussa, we marched quietly back through the wood to the spot where the bulk of the regiment

was already formed. Here I learnt that Colonel von Eberstein had been mortally wounded. The entire loss of the regiment consisted of 4 Officers killed, and 13 wounded, and of 10 men killed, 80 wounded, and 14 missing.

I did not observe what troops furnished outposts north of our bivouac that night, and I have since learned that none were furnished by the 32nd Brigade. I believe, however, that the 10th and 3rd Corps held ground facing north from about Mars-la-Tour to Vionville, whence what may be described as the convexity of an arc, sweeping along the edge of the southern wood to a point where communication was opened with the outposts of the 49th Brigade.

The Commander and Staff of the 25th, or Hessian Division, to which the last-named Brigade belonged, and which, at the commencement of the campaign was attached to the 9th Army Corps, arrived at Corny, to judge from a relation of its movements purporting to be official,<sup>1</sup> as early as 1 p.m., and received, first of all, notice that all disposable troops of the corps were to push forward to the assistance of the 3rd then engaged; then about 4 p.m., that matters did not seem well with the 5th Division; lastly, an urgent request for assistance on the right flank on the heights above Gorze. Although Prince Louis gave orders at once for the 49th Brigade,—I believe only 4 battalions strong with a "Reiter" regiment and 3 batteries to make for the bridge at once, followed by the 50th Brigade of 5 battalions, and the Jäger Battalion of the former,—it seems that the head of his column, after taking off packs at Corny, could not get across till between 4 and 4.30. The infantry was pushed into the Bois des Chevaux, and des Ognons, and having advanced by an open space called the Puits de Gent, relieved some of the 52nd Regiment who had fallen back. Six companies of the 1st Regiment came to close quarters with the enemy, moving somewhat in echelon with the right refused, but the account does not say if they got so

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the number of the *Militärische Blätter*, edited by G. von Glasenapp, Berlin, already quoted from.

far forward as the north edge of the Onion wood. Whatever position it was that they obtained possession of, reinforcements by the remaining half battalion, and by the 2nd Regiment, were required to enable them to hold it. These charged forward by independent company-columns, and had a successful effect on the enemy's left. An order by the Prince to cease firing is described as having been given about 10.30, but my impression is that long before that hour all noises but those caused by the French sounding and shouting the assembly, had ceased. The Jäger Battalion and the 50th Brigade, having met with something like a jam, did not arrive, the former till 1, and the latter till 3 a.m., when they took position in the open space towards the ravine leading up from Ars-sur-Moselle. The cavalry regiment and one battery unfortunately followed the infantry out of Gorze, and consequently could not be turned to account. The movements of the other guns I have described, but I have been surprised to read that they had time to fire away as many as nearly 9 rounds each. The losses of the division came to 5 men killed, 1 Officer and 62 wounded, and 21 men missing.

The total loss of the German troops—not including those of 2 Cavalry Brigades—is given in the account I have quoted from, as amounting to 626 Officers, 15,925 men. That of the French is believed to have been little less. The strength of the Germans at the close of the action I make out to have been 61 battalions, perhaps 70 squadrons, and 222 guns, giving a total of men of all arms, which, allowing for the losses of the 5th Division and 40th regiment on the 6th, and for baggage-guard and stragglers, could hardly have exceeded 60,000. Whatever may have been the strength of the French troops actually brought into action, there cannot have been available within a radius half, or less than half, the length of that which the reinforcements to the 3rd Prussian Corps had to traverse, of the five French Corps an effective below 140,000 men, of which, some 25,000 cavalry, with about 400 guns. The reader will, I trust, be able to form an idea of the strength proportionally each to the other the armies possessed at different stages of the action. In this engagement the German loss,

proportionally to strength engaged, was heavier than in any other fight during the campaign.

It may be well supposed that supplies were not very abundant in the bivouac that night. The men had, of course, their "Iron portions," but I doubt if many of the Officers were better off than myself, who had had nothing since the coffee and black bread at the early rouse. While writing, I can see the tragical faces of the listeners to my pathetic description of how four fat chickens, which had been tied to my saddle in the forenoon, had parted company during my ride across the vine-hills.

## CHAPTER X.

### FRENCH ARMY ABANDONS RETREAT ON VERDUN AND CHALONS—BATTLE OF GRAVELOTTE OR ST. PRIVAT.

EVER since I have begun to grasp in some measure an idea of the great movements, of which I could only witness a few, and then not always understand these, have I regretted that the first thing on the morning of the 17th I did not make for the scene of the previous day's action. I offer as excuses to myself, as well as to any readers who may be interested in my narrative, that I was troubled with many cares. I had received notice that the hoped-for extension of leave had not been granted, and felt that as soon as some decisive result was obtained, after which it would be decent to retire, I must return to England; the missing bag deserved a search; uncertainty as to whether there would not be hard work that day, made it advisable to spare "Gustavus," and give him a chance of getting something to eat, and the absence of legitimation-papers deterred me from going far from those by whom I was known.

If I had gone up to the plateau, where the Staff and Artillery of the 3rd Corps stood on the previous evening, I should probably have seen thereabouts the Commander-in-Chief of the 2nd Army, for, according to an account<sup>1</sup> similar to that last quoted, that Prince betook himself to the battle-field at 4 a.m. The German troops, which had bivouacked on the ground, had taken up their positions, the general front being, I presume, parallel to the Metz-Mars-la-Tour road.

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<sup>1</sup> *Relation über die Schlacht bei Gravelotte*, published in the January and February Numbers (1871) of the *Militärischen Blätter*.

From the enemy's side many calls were heard, and a line of skirmishers was extended from Rezonville to cover, as it afterwards appeared, the withdrawal of that part of his force on Gravelotte.

About 6 a.m. the 9th Corps began to arrive, and was massed under cover to the left of the road from Gorze to Vionville. The attached 25th (Hessian) Division remained, however, I believe, in the neighbourhood of Gorze till the morning of the 18th.

As soon as the patrols had definitely reported the withdrawal of the enemy, the men were allowed to break off and cook. At noon a rear guard was made out to be occupying Gravelotte, and later, various Corps were observed on the plateau of Leipzig and Moscou. Clouds of dust, and smaller detachments on the march, had been discovered in the direction of Conflans; also there were signs of French troops marching on Verneville. Everything went to show that the enemy had no intention of prosecuting an attack, and the fact that three more corps<sup>1</sup> could be counted on to arrive in time to take part in the morrow's fight, urged the Head of the German Forces to postpone any further undertaking on their part.

At a quarter to two in the afternoon, therefore, the following order was issued under direction of the King, who had also arrived on the field soon after six, by General von Moltke.—“The second Army will fall in at 5 a.m. to-morrow, the 18th, and advance by echelons between the Yron and Gorze brooks, (generally between Ville sur Yron and Rezonville.)” “The 8th Army Corps has to connect itself with this movement on the right wing of the 2nd Army.

“The 7th Army Corps will have at commencement the task of assuring the movements of the 2nd Army against possible enterprises of the enemy from the direction of Metz. Further directions by His Majesty the King will depend on the measures

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<sup>1</sup> 12th arrived early in the afternoon, between Puxieux and Mars-la-Tour; Guard, which came into line between Mars-la-Tour and Hannonville au passage, soon after 3 p.m., and 2nd on the march,



"adopted by the enemy. Reports for His Majesty to "be sent first of all to the height south of Flavigny."

To the 2nd Corps orders were despatched by Prince Frederic Charles, that it should march off from Pont-à-Mousson at 4 a.m., by Arnaville, Bayonville, and Onville on Buxières, there to form up and cook.

The line of outposts for the night, extended from those of the 1st Army at the Bois des Ognons, south of Rezonville, to a wood north-west of Vionville, and thence to the brook Yron. It will thus be understood that the 2nd Prussian Army had lost feeling with the enemy; but that its commander, who had two Cavalry Divisions at work watching the roads from Metz, was also ready with five Army Corps concentrated to fall on the French flank in case another attempt was made to carry out the Marshal's plan of marching on Verdun and Châlons.

The pivot, on which the 2nd Army was to manœuvre next day, received strength and completeness of organization by the arrival of the 15th Division and the 7th Army Corps, on the left flank of the Moselle. The former marched off at 5 a.m. from Lorry, crossed the river by a bridge constructed by the 9th Corps at Arry, and then received orders from General von Goeben, who had ridden a-head by the chain bridge to the battle-field, to advance to the heights south-west of Rezonville, eventually to concentrate on the 16th Division. Reserve Artillery and Ammunition Columns were directed to follow. While the 8th Corps thus occupied the defile leading up from Gorze and the Bois des Ognons, the 7th<sup>1</sup> was established during the day on the passage from Ars to Gravelotte, and in the Bois de Vaux. By the outposts of the latter, the enemy was observed to hold a fortified position at Point du Jour, and a camp visible near Moscou was estimated to contain from one to two Army Corps. The open ground between the wood and Gravelotte is described as being kept swept during the day by Mitrailleuse fire, volleys

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<sup>1</sup> Following a similar account in the already quoted periodical for April-May.

being bestowed on any horsemen or foot detachments that showed themselves.

My own time was spent chiefly in looking for my lost bag,<sup>2</sup> but in the afternoon I attended the funeral of Colonel von Eberstein and two other Officers of the Hohenzollern Fusiliers. They were buried in the cemetery north-west of Gorze.

At 5 a.m. on the 18th, Prince Frederic Charles communicated verbally to the Commanders of the Guard, 10th, and 12th Corps in the bivouac south of Mars-la-Tour, the arrangements for the day, and repeated them to the Generals of the 3rd and 9th Corps at the west entrance of Vionville half-an-hour later. The instructions were as follows:—

“The 2nd Army pursues its advance to-day with the endeavour to force the enemy back from his line of retreat—Metz-Verdun—and to beat him wherever it finds him.

“The Army advances in echelon, on the left the 12th Army Corps, which falls in at five, and takes as point of direction Jarny, close on the right the Guard Corps with the point of direction—Doncourt.

“The 9th Corps, on the right-rear of the Guards, falls in at six, and marches through between Rezonville and Vionville, in its further advance leaving St. Marcel close on its left. The 8th Corps will join the echelon movement on the right-rear of the 9th.

“In 2nd Line: The 10th Corps, with Rheinbaben’s Cavalry Division, follows the 12th, the 3rd and Duke William of Mecklenburg’s Cavalry Division, between the 9th and Guard Corps. The movement is not to be executed in columns of route; but the divisions are to advance, each forming a mass.

“The Commander-in-Chief will keep at the head of the 3rd Army Corps.”

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<sup>2</sup> As my search was in vain, I left word that if the bag and papers were found and restored to me, I should ask no questions about the money it contained, a £5 note and near about 20 Napoleons. In the following November, bag, bank note, and papers, were handed over to me in the Military Secretary’s Office at the Horse Guards.

The King arrived on the ground, south of Flavigny, at six.

The first reports received were to the effect that Gravelotte was not occupied by the enemy; that east of it there stood a camp; that movement was going on in the camps at Moscou and Leipzig; also that those at Bruville and St. Marcel were abandoned. There were no indications that the bulk of the enemy's force was marching by Conflans. It being then assumed that the enemy's position was on the heights of Amanvillers, a halt was called until the correctness of the supposition should be tested. The order was obeyed by the 9th Corps at 8.30, as it reached the farm of Caulre. To the Guard and 12th Corps were sent instructions to stay their movements at Doncourt and Jarny. The 10th Corps was directed to halt at Bruville; the 3rd had not yet moved.

The probability of the enemy's making a stand on the plateau of Amanvillers becoming stronger, the following orders were issued:—

“(10 a.m.) The 9th Army Corps is to fall in and “advance in the direction of Verneville and La Folie. “If the enemy stands there with his right wing, the “Corps is to engage action, commencing with a “considerable display of Artillery.

“(10½ a.m.) The Guard Corps continues its advance “by Doncourt as far as Verneville, and there takes “up position as support to the 9th Corps, which “advances on La Folie against the enemy's right “wing; clearing the ground through Amanvillers and “St. Privat la Montagne, as also speedy reports are “desirable.”

Not till 10.30 did the reports that came in, place beyond doubt that the enemy stood prepared to fight on the plateau—Amanvillers, Leipzig, Moscou. Thereon was issued the following order from the King:—

“From the reports that are coming in, it may be “assumed that the enemy wishes to make a stand “on the plateau between the Point du Jour and “Montigny la Grange, four of his battalions have “advanced in the Bois des Genivaux. His Majesty “is of opinion that it will be judicious to set the

"12th and Guard Corps in movement in the direction of Batilly, so that in case the enemy marches on Briey he may be reached at St. Marie aux Chênes. In case he holds to the heights, he may be attacked from Amanvillers.

"The result would have to be an attack simultaneously by the 1st Army from Bois de Vaux and Gravelotte, by the 9th Corps against the Bois de Genevaux and Verneville, by the left wing of the 2nd Army from the north."

I suppose that this message took some time to reach Prince Frederic Charles, for the detailed instructions appear not to have been despatched to Corps Commanders till the hours as below:—

At 11.30, to General Von Manstein (9th Corps)—  
 "The Guard Corps is just receiving an order to push forward by Verneville on Amanvillers, thence probably to attack the enemy's right wing. Any serious engagement on the part of the 9th Army Corps, in case the enemy's front extends further north than the ground before it, is to be postponed till the Guard Corps attacks from Amanvillers."

At 11.30, to Prince Augustus of Württemberg (Guard):—"The enemy seems to stand in battle array along the high ridge from Bois de Vaux, by Leipzig. The Guard Corps is to hasten its march through Verneville, to extend as far as Amanvillers, and thence to advance to a vigorous flanking attack on the enemy's right wing. The 9th Corps will at the same time advance to attack La Folie. The Guard Corps may also use the road by Habonville. The 12th Corps marches on St. Marie."

At 11.45, to the Crown Prince of Saxony (12th Corps):—"The 12th Corps is directed to march on St Marie aux Chênes; to furnish covering by Cavalry towards Briey and beyond Conflans, and as much as possible to push Cavalry forward into the valley of the Moselle, so as to break up railway and telegraph to Thionville. The 7th, 8th, 9th, and Guard Corps attack, within two hours, the enemy who stands in position on the heights from Leipzig to Bois de Vaux, with his back to Metz. In 2nd

"line there follow the 3rd, 10th, and 12th, as also the 2nd Corps."

At noon, to General von Voigts-Rhetz (10th Corps):—"The enemy stands in position on the heights of Leipzig and Bois de Vaux. He will be attacked to-day by the Guard Corps at Amanvillers; by the 9th Corps at La Folie; by the 7th and 8th in front. In 2nd line advance to support: the 12th Corps on St. Marie, the 10th on St. Ail, the 3rd on Verneville, the 2nd on Rezonville."

At noon, to General von Fransecky (2nd Corps):—"The 2nd Corps marches forwards from Buxières on Rezonville to serve as reserve to the right wing. The 1st and 2nd Armies attack the enemy to-day in the position on this side of Metz."

I have given a nearly literal translation of these orders, taken from the already quoted source, as indicating better than any narrative could do, the extent of knowledge possessed by the Prussian Staff of the enemy's whereabouts; how that knowledge was increased; and how the former's plans were modified at each successive stage of information. It must have been a splendid sight, for any one who was early that morning near the Mars-la-Tour-Metz road, to have witnessed even part of the advance of this grand échelon of 125 battalions—most of those in 1st line being up to the full strength of 1,000 men each<sup>1</sup>—and a profitable one to have observed with what degree of regularity the prescribed movements in masses of twelve battalions each, were effected across the extent of country indicated; but knowing as usual the orders for the brigade only at the outside, I missed seeing anything of this grand manœuvring, for the 8th Corps debouched from the Gorze defile by an ordinary route-march along the narrow forest road. The 15th Division led, having been ordered into position between Rezonville and Villers-aux-Bois; but on the march General von Goeben received orders to place his Corps *à cheval* on the great road between Rezonville and Gravelotte, from which point,

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<sup>1</sup> The Guards and Saxons had not previously come under fire.

as soon as the 9th corps should come into action, to advance through the latter village and attack the enemy's position beyond. It seemed a long time before the 15th Division filed off from Côte Mousa, and I think it was nearly ten when the 32nd Brigade unpiled arms and followed. We crossed the scenes of the last struggle on the evening of the 16th, and halted on the slope of the ravine just short of the high road. The six battalions formed mass, facing about east, and piled arms. Nothing was to be seen from this cover, but by riding up the western slope and a little to the left-rear, I came on the Staff of the 8th Corps waiting on the road, on which also, and further to the rear, stood the Reserve Artillery. From where I now dismounted for some time, a view was to be had of the French standing in apparently great force on as much of the Moscou-Leipzig slope as was not masked by the woods on our right-front and half-left. There was no doubt that a pitched battle, different from anything I had seen before, was coming off.

Marshal Bazaine's Army held a simple but strong position. The left, formed by the 2nd Corps, stood on the ridge of the Point du Jour, where the road from Gravelotte after ascending the height makes a bend southwards before it descends into a ravine, between what was the French position and Fort St. Quentin. The 3rd Corps extended along the top of the slope which falls gently westward to the edge of the wood, covering the steeper descent into the ravine of Ars-sur-Moselle, and occupied the farm-steadings of Moscou, Leipzig, and La Folie. The 4th lay between the last place and Amanvillers, and the 6th prolonged the line to beyond St. Privat-la-Montagne. The Guard stood as Reserve in rear of the left-centre.

Almost exactly at noon, artillery firing was to be heard and smoke seen ascending well away half-left. This was caused by the 9th Corps, which after having cooked food at Caulre Ferme, had resumed its march with the 18th Division leading, followed by the Reserve Artillery, the latter by the Hessians.

Verneville having been occupied by the advanced guard, and the divisional with the Reserve Artillery (in all 66 guns, I suppose) having opened fire from the heights of Champenois, the enemy's answer soon made it apparent that his line extended much further to the north, than, as will have been understood from the before quoted orders, the Prussian Staff had up to this time supposed, for proofs were received that French batteries stood not only at Montigny la Grange and Amanvillers, but also at St. Privat. The German Artillery is described as having been established so close to the enemy's line as to suffer also from mitrailleuse and rifle fire, one battery losing 100 horses, and a partial infantry fight as having at once commenced with battalions, encountered in front of the French line.

The signal for the advance of the 8th Corps had not been heard many minutes, when the 15th Division emerged from the cover to the left of the road, in which it had lain so well concealed that, while waiting, I had no idea of more troops than the 32nd Brigade being so close. The 29th Brigade was directed through Gravelotte down into the ravines beyond, principally to the right of the road; the 30th leaving the village to the right, plunged into the Bois des Genivaux. The formation, while still advancing over open ground, was (for the right brigade at least) 1st line (Treffen) 4 company columns at 80 paces interval, covered by their marksmen's Zügen skirmishing with supports; in 2nd line followed the other two battalions of the regiment<sup>1</sup> in "attack columns" opposite the outer intervals of the 1st; the remaining regiment formed a reserve, detaching, however, a battalion to escort guns. Although Gravelotte was not defended, the rush through it by the skirmishers was very pretty. I followed near the staff, and was presently accosted by an Officer, who rode up and asked, in French,

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<sup>1</sup> The 33rd Fusiliers, belonging for recruiting purposes to the 1st Army Corps (East Prussia), but prior to the war garrisoning Cologne, and during the campaign attached to the 8th, commanded by Colonel von Henning, late of the 2-40th, the first Prussian Commanding Officer I had made acquaintance with.

what I was doing there. On my answering in German that I was an English Officer, he gave me a sort of hug and introduced me soon afterwards to Major-General von Wedell commanding the 29th Brigade. Gravelotte having been cleared, General von Goeben rode through to the south-east corner, where dismounting and leaving the bulk of his staff and horses by the church, he walked with his chief of the staff along the outside of a garden enclosure to a point whence he could get a good view of the ground and of the enemy without drawing down fire. I was foolish enough to ride on along a road running somewhat south and take post behind a hedge, when one of the staff came and informed me that the General wished no one to ride outside. I returned and got one of the orderlies to hold my horse; then went back to the hedge and was watching what I could see, when the General came behind me, and putting his hands on my shoulders, addressed me as "My old friend," and asked me to come away. The Division had by this time pretty well disappeared in the ravine below, and French skirmishers were to be seen retiring therefrom on the higher-posted troops. Presently the 8th Corps staff moved through the village to the north-east angle and took post on a sort of natural platform just left of the high road.<sup>1</sup> Here also unlimbered the 66 guns of the Divisional and Reserve Artillery. I don't think they had fired more than half-a-dozen rounds when I saw, near Moscou, two French tumbrils explode in quick succession. These batteries were soon afterwards, if I mistake not, reinforced by the 4 of the 16th Division, for which a position had been sought to the right of the village, but found already occupied by artillery of the 7th Corps. The latter force of guns was eventually, I believe, made up to 54 guns. The nature of the ground allowed, as well as I can recollect, of my seeing from where I stood between the staff and the artillery along the enemy's front, beginning on my left between La Folie

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<sup>1</sup> Where there is now (1871) a rude monument to the fallen of the 33rd Regiment.



and Leipzig, and ending on my right with the poplars which border the high road south of Point du Jour. A glance at the map will give a better idea than could any description of mine, of the wooded valley, which separated these two combatants' wings. At a distance far enough beyond the further edge of the woods to allow of a beautiful glacis being kept swept by mitrailleuse and rifle fire, seemed from the smoke which ascended therefrom, to run the French first line, well intrenched, on which their skirmishers fell back, as the Prussians made their way through. I don't think the whole of the second line was visible, a great part of it, no doubt, standing somewhat over the brow, but besides some columns drawn up here and there I distinctly remember watching and wondering if the Prussian guns would succeed in hitting, what struck me as the largest mass of troops I had ever seen, posted about where a small reddish house stands, it seemed from my point of observation, near the wood behind, but north of Leipzig. But both that and other bodies in reserve seemed out of range, and what batteries the French had at commencing established in front of their line, were speedily either silenced or driven too far back to do much harm at Gravelotte. Per contra those of the 7th and 8th Corps could not do much in the way of keeping down the fire from the intrenchments, which greeted the infantry on issuing from the wood. The 15th Division found the natural difficulty of passage across the valley much increased by obstacles, such as barricades across the paths and open spaces in the wood. It may be well conceived that it was difficult to preserve anything like exactness of formation amongst some 10,000 men struggling through such thick cover with their front limited to the extent of about half an English mile.<sup>1</sup> Also anyone can understand what a temptation the broad road in the centre must have afforded to men at all out of hand to incline thereto, and cause at

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<sup>1</sup> I write this subject to correction, but my estimate is founded on the formation of the division at the commencement of its advance, and what I could observe afterwards.

once confused crowding thereon. Notwithstanding these difficulties, however, the division was not long in clearing the wood, and I believe that part of the retreating French Infantry was pursued some way northwards. What I recollect seeing myself is that soon after the staff came to the north-east of Gravelotte, a rush was made from the wood by part of the 30th Brigade along and on the left of the high road to the enemy's advanced post at the farm of St. Hubert, which was quickly carried. Attempts to advance from the wood further north against the intrenched batteries failed, the men either falling back into the wood or inclining to the high road, which being cut through the first part of the eastern ascent from the valley and having, where it issues from the wood, some deep sand pits on either side affords considerable shelter. On the right of the road the 29th Brigade was also brought to a stand on the edge of the wood, but nearer the enemy's line, I think, than extends the cover through which the other brigade struggled. As the Commander of the former said afterwards, if he had attempted to issue forth, he might have reached the French position, but with no troops left. He had to send to the 7th Corps on his right for a regiment to help him to maintain his position. The Commander of the Division had directed to assist in the storming of St. Hubert, two battalions he had hitherto kept in reserve. Describing what I could see from the artillery position, I should mention that my view was limited directly to the right and left, that the movements of the 2nd Army were completely hid, as also were those of the 7th Corps except certain ones which I shall presently describe, and that at the time I had no idea there was another Army Corps on our right, absence of my map causing me to under-estimate the distance of our flank from the Moselle. After the capture of St. Hubert I must say it began to wax somewhat tedious. If I had only thought of going a little way to the left rear, where the 1-40th stood,<sup>1</sup> I should

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<sup>1</sup> The 32nd Brigade being all this time in reserve.

probably have come upon His Majesty and a crowd of celebrities, whom I had no other opportunity of seeing. An Officer wearing what I thought was naval uniform, whom I, therefore, took to be Prince Adalbert, came once or twice to the 8th Corps Staff, attended by an Aide-de-camp who carried a huge ship-glass under his arm. Although I knew nothing of the echelon movement northwards by the 2nd Army, yet the aspect of the French position, its natural strength in our front seeming to decrease northwards, and the quarter where the smoke of artillery was first observable, enabled me to form a theory of the plan of action, that the 8th Corps, after having established itself at Gravelotte and the wood in front with an outpost at St. Hubert, was to serve as a pivot for the army to wheel on, and that we should attempt no further advance until we should see the enemy's right begin to fall back. Therefore the feeling of tedium was mingled with impatience while hoping for a view of Prussian troops coming down from the north against the great French mass, which had been standing all this time inert. I believe that the assumption of the enemy's right wing extending only as far as Amanvillers, was present with the staff of the 1st Army, as well as, probably, longer than with that of the 2nd. Before describing the results of impatience on the right at delayed success of the left wing, I had better continue the summary of the movements of the latter, but am sorry that I have no notes of the exact time at which each of the former became apparent, so as to make a comparison between them.

By 1 p.m. Prince Frederic Charles was at Verneville, and no doubt learnt that a further extension of his line northwards must be effected in order to embrace the enemy's right flank, for the 2nd Infantry Division of the Guards, at the time on the march to Verneville, at once received orders to incline to the left on Habonville, whither also the 1st Infantry Division was *en route* by Jouaville. About 2 p.m. the Reserve Artillery and that of the 1st Division of the Guard, gradually reinforced to 84 guns, opened fire from a position between Habonville and St. Ail, these village

being occupied by the two Infantry Divisions. The enemy's position was seen to extend as far as Roncourt, and in front of his line he was found to be in occupation of St. Marie aux Chênes. The heads of the Saxon columns were visible north of Batilly. Prince Augustus of Württemberg then received orders to postpone attack by infantry until the 12th Corps should get engaged to some effect. At 2.30 the Crown Prince of Saxony reported to Prince Frederic Charles as follows:—"The 12th Army Corps advances with the 24th Infantry Division to the attack of St. Marie, and with the 23rd by Coinville and the small woods lying between that place and Roncourt, envelopes the right flank of the French." By 3.30 St. Marie was taken by parts of the Guard and Saxons, after which the Reserve Artillery of the latter was established on the north side against St. Privat and Roncourt. Not till 5 p.m. did the 12th Corps reach the line, St. Marie—Joeuf, and not till 6.30 did the flank attack commence from Roncourt on St. Privat.

While these movements on the left were taking so much longer to execute than had been counted on I rather think that in consequence of the delay, there arose in the minds of the Commanders on the right, an idea that it was caused by the French bringing the bulk of their force to bear against the 2nd Army, and that to relieve the latter from this pressure it was necessary for the 1st Army to make an effort against what of the enemy stood in its front. I do not know if any orders were issued on the point by His Majesty, beyond that an account of the 7th Corps' share in the action—similar to those from which I have been quoting—states that one was received at 2.30 from that quarter, directing that the fight should be continued by artillery only, and that the infantry should be content with holding the Bois de Vaux. Be this as it may, I remember well as the afternoon progressed, General von Steinmetz riding hastily up to General von Goeben and evidently give orders for more troops to be pushed forward. I am not sure that I had not seen the former come

previously to the 8th Corps Staff, and I stood too far off to hear what words passed, but I have a distinct recollection of the scene—the elder veteran talking rapidly and excitedly, gesticulating and pointing vehemently; the younger calm and collected as ever. Immediately after the incident an advance of more troops down the road took place, which I did not like the look of, more especially, too, when a regiment of Lancers moved down into the valley. The head of the latter attempted to debouch on the slope opposite St. Hubert, but had to wheel about at once, and what were the leading squadrons of the 1st Cavalry Division, retired from the absurd attempt to the Gravelotte plateau. Two or three—I am not sure which number—batteries of the 7th Corps crossed the valley and unlimbered on the open slope which the cavalry had found too hot, and worked there in a most heroic manner, till I believe, most, if not all of their guns, were placed *hors-de-combat*. The infantry sent forward consisted, I fancy, of the 31st Brigade, which, I know, arrived on the field in the afternoon,<sup>1</sup> and was at once pushed forward with orders to cross the valley by the road and advance to the attack of Moscou. This movement was also a failure, the columns falling back into either the wood, the gravel pits, or the road. The Commander of the 7th Corps, General von Zastrow, is described as having at 3.45 directed two brigades against Point du Jour; but anyhow they did not get beyond the edge of the wood opposite. I have no distinct recollection of how the action continued at this point beyond what I have related, except that the position gained at St. Hubert was held throughout. I believe, however, that at about five an attempt was made by the enemy to regain possession of the Bois des Genivaux, and that it was against such an endeavour that the last available battalions were ordered forward. These were four of the 32nd Brigade, and included the 2nd and 3rd

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that I have made a mistake in not describing the advance of this brigade as taking place earlier with reference to other occurrences, and that the infantry at this time pushing forward, was from the 32nd Brigade.

of the 40th. The 2nd went against the Bois des Genivaux with two company-columns, supported by the remaining half-battalion, but finding the wood occupied by their own people, then pushed on along the road and sides, the 5th and 6th Companies to St. Hubert and left, the 7th and 8th to the right. The 3rd Battalion crossed the valley much in the same way, and its company-columns made various attempts against the ridge. I doubt if anyone could give a clear, detailed account of what passed between 5 p.m. and dark. Companies of not only different regiments, but of different brigades, were mixed up in the repeated charges up the slope, swept by the enemy's mitrailleuse and rifle fire. Thus the 8th Company of the 40th from the 32nd Brigade, found itself united at one time with detachments of the 29th and 33rd Regiments belonging respectively to the 31st and 29th Brigades, and later joined in a rush forwards by the Jägers of the 2nd Army Corps.

If I recollect rightly, the batteries of the 8th Corps on the left of Gravelotte, had ceased firing when the last described advance of infantry took place. They had overpowered the enemy's artillery, and shelled his Infantry, whenever either ventured out of the intrenched position; but I don't think that their fire took much effect on the troops in the last, or in reserve. There was no other position from which their fire could be rendered more effective, as was shewn by the fate of the 7th Corps batteries. After seeing the two battalions of the 40th pass forward, I waited a little to see if Rosen with his one was also coming on, then rode forward to the edge of the Bois des Genivaux, along which General von Barnekow was superintending the entry of what infantry had not passed through, and making my horse scramble down to the road, took the way up to St. Hubert. Here and in the quarries before reaching the building and its walled enclosure, were men of different regiments with an alarmingly small proportion of Officers. Those sheltered by the walls had been and were still doing their best to adapt the defences for firing towards the French trenches, but those covered by

the deep part of the road, and the pits or quarries lower down, could not fire to any advantage. I do not remember precisely whether many projectiles were coming from the enemy, but soon after I got up to this point, three shells from our own batteries—one of the 7th Corps I rather think—burst about 20 paces in rear of where I stood. Luckily the Adjutant<sup>1</sup> of the 32nd Brigade was not far off, and he galloped back to prevent a repetition of such unpleasantness. There were Prussian troops further up the road, but I could not see how far, nor could I distinguish any Frenchmen, for besides that it was getting dusk, it was not easy to obtain anything of a view. Suddenly, as I was standing dismounted near the walled enclosure, an ammunition waggon came down the road at a gallop, driverless, and with one of the team dragging along in its harness. A crowd of fugitives followed, sweeping me away in their course, so that it was with difficulty I could keep hold of my horse. It was very unpleasant. "Are we going to be tumbled back into the Moselle?" I thought—" *Que diable allais-je faire dans cette galère?*" But I came on the fine old Brigadier Rex, making a stand with his Orderly Officer in the middle of the road, about in line with the highest quarries, and took post beside him. He was working hard at restoring order, but being unfortunately on foot, he had some difficulty in making his orders tell. However, his Orderly Officer, a young Subaltern of the 9th Hussars, had his own horse in hand and in a few minutes mounted and rode forward, calling on the men to follow him. I could not resist the inclination to see what the effect would be, so dragged my horse out of the crowd, mounted and followed. It was beautiful; all the men about, whether halted or retreating, followed the young Lieutenant with cheers up the road past the inn and its garden. I had pulled up and was craning over one of the walls to try and make out if the French were issuing from their holes, when I heard an unpleasant singing all round me like a discharge of grape, and felt Gustavus

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<sup>1</sup> Brigade-Major we should say.

sink gradually under me, till he sprawled on his side.<sup>1</sup> Continued mitrailleuse fire urged me after disengaging myself, to be content with tearing off my great coat and saddle-bags, and get sharp under cover of the wall, where I sat a little while with some of the 72nd. None of what may be called the garrison of St. Hubert had, I believe, flinched during this temporary panic on the road, and what troops had got cover on either side, were also free from it. I did not myself see any cause for the men in front giving way, and was at the time inclined to think that the row made by the ammunition waggon had taken effect on men nervous from standing some time under the fire of an unseen enemy, without being able to return it; but I have since learnt that strong detachments of the enemy had made a rush forward towards St. Hubert. I must not omit to say that I saw General von Goeben up at this point, but I think before the last-mentioned occurrence. He had himself brought up the last battalions, and after having had a good look at the state of things, had made up his mind that it would be of no use to direct a further attempt against the intrenchments, but that he must be content with holding the ground already won. He therefore gave orders for the fresh battalions to hold on to St. Hubert, and for the remainder to be withdrawn and formed up in rear. The latter part of this order must have been in execution, as my Hussar friend, who had also been unhorsed, and myself, rejoined the Brigadier, for the crowding on the road recommenced, which made me fear that another panic had set in. There was much shouting by men seeking their respective regiments, while both confusion and din were increased by the arrival, as good or ill luck would have it—I hardly know which to think—of heads of columns of the

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<sup>1</sup> As instances of how news from the seat of war increases by travelling, I may mention that a German Officer later in the campaign informed me that I had had two horses shot under me, and that an admiring relative to whom I sent a specimen of a balloon newspaper, sent out during the siege of Paris and given me by a friend at Amiens, insisted that I had captured it myself.



2nd Corps. These had been pushed forward from Gravelotte, I have no doubt, just before order had been restored at St. Hubert, and were in full expectation of coming right on the enemy. Their drums were beating a charge, thereby making it more difficult to explain the state of things to the leading Officers, and some shots were fired from their front ranks. It struck me as fortunate that the Brigadier was there to tell the new comers what to do, for in the little light that remained, a fresh arriving Commanding Officer could hardly have been much blamed, even if he had directed a volley into the crowd in front. I recollect that Colonel von Rex was more than once asked who he was by Officers who could not distinguish his rank. Partly by debouching to the right and left on the slopes, partly by keeping their men halted and steady until the remnants of the 8th Corps had passed them, did these columns at last find open ground to advance over. The last thing I remember seeing, was one of the columns on the slope to the right falling back some paces, then rallying and rushing forward again. Firing seemed to cease very soon after.

The work of re-forming the 8th Corps was still going on, the order being now for it to bivouac in front of Gravelotte, as reserve to the 2nd. I got separated in the crowd from my Hussar, and was captured by a Commandant of Jägers. As the latter, however, had something better to do than look after me, I escaped from him and re-found my friend, with whom I passed the night on the ground. Some detachments of the Corps did not reach their bivouac till about 11 p.m.

How far forward the 2nd Corps made its way that night, I am not quite certain. I understood next day that it had pressed on to the intrenchments, which were evacuated in the dark; but the accounts of the 7th Corps and of the *Officier de l'Armée du Rhin*, from which I have quoted, state that the French did not abandon Point du Jour till the morning of the 19th.

Towards the Prussian left also, the turning movement

[illegible]

On the 21st of June, 1864, the 1st and 2nd Regiments of the 1st Maine Cavalry were detached, about 10 miles, to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~junction~~ <sup>junction</sup> of the Orne, and joined the 1st Maine Cavalry towards the Moselle River, ~~arriving at~~ <sup>arriving at</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~junction~~ <sup>junction</sup> of the Orne in breaking up ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~connection~~ <sup>connection</sup> with Minnville. The Crown Prince was ~~detached~~ <sup>detached</sup> further to push a strong detachment west to T. 1864.

The losses of the 3rd Army exclusive of the 2nd Corps were 12,000 Officers and 13,000 men; of the 1st Corps 12,000 Officers, 13,000 men, and 140 horses. Those of the 5th and 7th Corps I do not know. My two more immediate friends, the 40th Regiment and the Artillery of the 16th Division, suffered comparatively little: the former having three men killed, two Officers and 44 men wounded, and 13 missing; the latter two Officers and seven men wounded, with six horses hit. The four batteries expended 1,223 rounds of shell.

<sup>1</sup> The account I quote from does not state that this brigade, though detached for the purpose, actually entered into action.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THOUGHTS OVER THE OPERATIONS ENDING IN BLOCKADE OF METZ—SELF OBLIGED TO RETURN TO ENGLAND.

As early on the 19th the whole of the French Army of the Rhine had withdrawn under the shelter of Forts St. Quentin and des Carrieres, or Plappeville, and the Prussians during the day cut off entirely communication with Thionville, the task of isolating that Army had been accomplished. Each of the three actions—on the 14th, 16th, and 18th of August—must be looked on as parts of a great manœuvre, by which the German 1st and 2nd Armies, though at the commencement of it (13th), their component parts were scattered to a great distance from the scene of action, succeeded in frustrating Bazaine's attempt to retire on Mac Mahon at Châlons. This attempt was resolved on by the 13th, and on that day, I believe, the 1st German advanced guard crossed the Moselle at Pont-à-Mousson, which is about equi-distant with Metz from Verdun, but a good deal further from Mars-la-Tour, the point on the Verdun road where the Marshal allowed himself to be stopped. I think that any intelligent Company Officer would have seen that the operation could be carried out only by moving the corps on the principle, taught in our old drill books, for the manœuvre of passing by companies from a flank along the rear, at the same time occupying, with skirmishers, such cover as might give shelter for an unseen enemy to assemble under. Thus, if the 2nd Corps, instead of dawdling in a purposeless sort of way along the Gravelotte road during the 14th and 15th, had been established during these two days on a line passing through Ars-sur-Moselle and Gorze to perhaps as far

as Chambley, with detachments thrown out to destroy the bridge at Novéant, and to disturb all attempts at making use of pontoons, and with the some 25,000 cavalry employed in forming a chain of posts watching the lines of approach from Pont-à-Mousson and southwards towards Verdun, and if each corps in succession had taken position on the right of the one previously marched off, the 6th Corps might have been established by the evening of the 15th *à-cheval* on the road from Thiancourt, and soon after noon on the 16th, the three other corps should have stood as reserve on the right rear of the last-named one. The crossing of the Moselle by at least one Division of the 3rd Prussian Corps on the 15th, might have been easily prevented; and the concentration early on the 16th by the French 2nd Corps and its closing on the 6th, could have been molested by hardly more than the 6th Prussian Infantry Division, the advance of which towards Onville it might not have been possible to prevent. Then the 6th French Corps in its position, say about Woël, could not have been attacked except by cavalry before noon, by which time the 2nd should have joined it on the left; and after that hour, if the 2nd Corps had done its duty to the Moselle passages the previous day, not more than three Prussian Infantry and two Cavalry Divisions could before nightfall have attacked the five French Corps concentrated with their right resting on the forested ridge which extends south-east of Verdun. Then considering the time required to concentrate the Prussian 2nd Army on the 17th, and the possibility that the Chief of the Great General Staff would have deemed it necessary to leave the whole 1st Army to blockade Metz, I think it would have been on the cards for the French Army of the Rhine to have effected its retreat to the fortress on the above-mentioned day, with little serious molestation. To what extent the success of the operation might have been hindered between Verdun and Châlons, lies too far beyond the scope of my studies for me to give an opinion upon. What has particularly attracted my attention is that Marshal Bazaine, on commencing his march westward out of Metz, behaved much as might have done

a German Commander who had obtained possession of Metz, and was using that fortress as a base whence to prosecute a further advance into his enemy's country. The ridiculously close-concentrated order of march, the absurdly little use made of the Cavalry—assuming that these knew something of outpost work—might have been dictated by a fact that the Army was marching through a hostile population. Then the greater care shewn to preserve communication with Metz, than to establish it with Verdun, goes far to decrease one's wonder at the charge of treason being preferred against him, and at the grave statement that during the subsequent blockade, he dined twice a week with Prince Frederic Charles.

French writers maintain that each day's engagement was, for their troops, a tactical success. I do not quite see, however, that they prove their case. On the 14th, as I make out, the Prussians gained ground till they came under fire of the forts and of the troops covered by them; the 16th, the more I think over the events of the day, the more do I consider to have been one of victory for the Germans. These succeeded in establishing themselves gradually, and arriving by details in a position on the flank and partially in front of a force at least double their own strength, not only where they held their ground, but whence they arrested the march of the army which ought to have driven them down the ravines into the Moselle. As regards the battle of the 18th, the French left and centre did certainly hold their ground, and it was only before superior and outflanking force that their right gave way, but they failed to take any advantage of the disorder into which their adversaries were thrown when attempting to storm the fortress-like position.

Comments by me on the German performances during this operation must be made with more diffidence, but still I must give expression to the ideas which constant thought over these events have given rise to. I hardly think that the success won on this occasion contributes so much to enhance the strategical reputation of the Great Chief of the Great General

Staff, as have done the subsequent operations resulting in the capitulation of Sedan. It has struck me rather that the splendid feeling of comradeship which pervades all ranks of the North German troops, a feeling which tells every Officer that, if he incurs danger, he is sure of speedy support from the nearest comrade to whom the fact becomes known, together with the knowledge possessed by all from high to low that it is the duty of each to take advantage of opportunities without waiting for orders, furnished the cause of the leading of all bodies of troops, from Army Corps down to companies, constantly left to the discretion of the immediate, sometimes very subordinate, Commanders, being so admirably conducted. Had it been otherwise, would, on the 14th, General von der Goltz have attacked the French rear-guard, merely sending word to his superior that he was going to do so, but would he not rather have sent to ask for permission, and by the time the answer came have lost the opportunity for arresting the French defiling across the Moselle? Would, on the 16th, General von Alvensleben have thrown his two divisions with such admirable devotion on Frossard's and Canrobert's Corps, all but immoveable till their Commander-in-Chief arrived, and would the Commanders of detachments of the 8th, 9th, and 10th Corps, have shown the wonderful alacrity with which they pushed up to the support of their comrades? There was no time to obtain orders from the King's Army,—or in some cases even Brigade-head-quarters, and none were wanted. The old rule which, as was pointed out to me the other day by a fellow-countryman high on the Prussian staff, was first prescribed by the Great Napoleon, but little followed by the troops of the Lesser, that of marching to the sound of the cannon, together with the feeling I have described, was enough.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I can never think over the work of these three days :—14th—16th, without a sort of enthusiasm, and *si licet*, &c., without regretting that on one occasion during the campaign of 1858 in Oude, when a splendid opportunity for attacking and cutting up the enemy presented itself, my regiment which furnished the outposts at the time did not attack without orders, and thereby compel to bring up the rest of his force, a General now in high repute at home, who waited to advance with great precaution next morning and found his enemy gone.

About the battle of the 18th—the greatest, with reference to numbers engaged, since that of Leipzig—I cannot write with so much satisfaction. That there was much unnecessary sacrifice of life on the right wing of the Germans there can be no doubt, and the fuss made about the arrival at the so-called critical moment of the 2nd Corps, as also the scene of Count Moltke's announcing its arrival to the King, which is to be found depicted in colours at nearly every picture-shop window in Germany, always make me angry to read and behold. I have begun also to entertain doubts whether the battle of Gravelotte should ever have been fought. The echelon movement of the 2nd Army to the North, and the formation of its corps successively fronting and out-flanking the French position, had, by evening of the 18th, cut Bazaine off not only from Verdun, but also from Thoinville, without the attack at any point of the line having at all contributed to the success of the operation. I cannot help thinking the odds were that during the night voluntarily, or next morning with little pressure, the position would have been abandoned, even if not a single shot had been fired at the French on the 18th. Yet there may have existed in the German general plan of operations the necessity for disabling the Army of the Rhine with the least possible delay, so as to allow of co-operation forwards with the Crown Prince. Still, while admiring immensely the manœuvre which drove Bazaine to fight with his back towards Germany, I must give by far the greatest amount to the unplanned battle of the 16th, during which, though the bloodiest of the three, every life sacrificed may be looked on as having done twice its share of duty, whether judged by the nature of the performance, or by the grand results following thereon.

On the morning of the 19th, the bulk of the 8th Army Corps assembled about Gravelotte, the 16th Division lying north of the village, while the 2nd Army Corps remained on and in front of our part of the last night's struggle. There was some talk about the temporary panic, and Brigadier von Rex

expressed his sorrow that I had seen Prussian soldiers in such disorder. I could only answer, what I then and have since felt, that I believed it was one of those accidents that history has taught us may happen to the best of troops, and that the occurrence had in no way diminished the esteem and affection I had begun to feel for the Prussian Army.

The indefatigable old Barnekow was about all day inspecting regiments. I could have wished rather to see the battalions at work cleaning their arms and filling their stomachs than standing waiting so long as they did; still it is pretty to hear the interchange of greeting between a German inspecting Officer and his men—"Good morning, children, Fusiliers or *quocunque nomine gaudent*"! then a whole battalion with one voice—"Morgen *Ex-lenz*"! Constantly an Officer is to be heard addressing one of his men as "my son" or "my child."

In the afternoon I walked out in the direction of St. Hubert to try and find Gustavus' remains, and perhaps recover my saddle and bridle. I had not quite the same intentions as regards his hide as had Dugald Dalgetty with that of the elder animal, though my raiment had suffered in the scramble of the night before, and I had to be publicly sewn up in presence of a brigade that morning. Going down into the valley I was arrested, as usual, by a sentry of the 2nd Army Corps, and then sent from the Guard to the battalion's or regiment's Commander, I forget which, receiving at a respectful distance the words—"Halt! Why don't you halt when I tell you?" The Field Officer kindly gave me a Non-Commissioned Officer to accompany me to St. Hubert and the outposts beyond. At the former I found no trace of my lost steed, but, going to the advanced Cavalry-picket placed near Châtel St. Germain, I had a distinct view of two French Camps standing between the forts of St. Quentin and des Carrières. About the corner of the road above St. Hubert, and from that corner (Point-du-jour) towards Leipzig, were the trenches which had given us so much trouble the night before, and which were now being turned the other way by



these tough Pomeranians. The cavalry officer told me that some shots from Fort St. Quentin had come as far as his neighbourhood. On return I diverged to the position of the six mitrailleuse batteries which had stood near Moscou.

On the 20th, in the morning, I paid a last visit to the outposts, for by this time the letter of recall, about which I had bothered myself somewhat these few grand days, had reached me. The two camps had disappeared during the night, and nothing was to be seen of the enemy. The Prussian troops held on this flank pretty much the same positions as on the previous day. At the 40th bivouac "love-gifts" from Trêves, consisting mostly of sausages and Moselle wine, were being discussed. A good draught of the latter was a pleasant change after having felt often compelled to sip merely from the proffered goblet, which one knew had to pass on to many more mouths.<sup>1</sup>

General von Goeben was very friendly on my taking leave of him, giving me a pass entitling me to travel by post. From all others, too, who called me comrade, I was much grieved to part. Before starting I was delighted to see one of the English Saarbrücken comrades just arrived, and giving his services to an ambulance sent by Germans living in England. The post-cart leaving in the afternoon took me across part of the field of the 16th, where seemed to me more corpses to lie about than on any other ground I had visited, and where a few human vultures seemed to be searching for valuables, then down through Gorze, where I had an opportunity of visiting Goldschmidt and two youngsters of the 40th, all badly wounded on the 16th. On arriving at Novéant, on the Moselle, to my disgust the driver said the cart was to go no further that night, but a Knight of St. John, in charge

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<sup>1</sup> Amongst the "love-gifts" came a large packet containing copies of one issue of a Glasgow newspaper. Major von Holleben handed them over to me, saying there was no one else they could be for. Reading one I found that a correspondent had met on the 2nd, the Company which had to make the détour by Dudweiler, and had treated the men; and that then they had asked him to send them his paper. I handed the copies over to the men of the company, who asked me to thank the Editor for them. I hope he will buy my book and receive the thanks.

of the rest-house established near the bridge, asked me to give my services to a convoy of wounded then starting for Courcelles, from which the railway to Saarbrücken was again in working order. It was a dreary trudge, and there was little good that I could do, except when the drivers of the hired country-carts, in which the patients lay, thought they had gone far enough, and wanted to halt, rest, and feed, to persuade the orderlies to treat them much as we have on emergencies to serve corresponding employés in India. We met numbers of volunteers wearing the Geneva badge, and proceeding on foot to the Army. Most of them seemed of the student class and age. At Courcelles, which we reached shortly before daylight, there were medical officers and assistants, but little accommodation. Soon after daybreak a train started for Saarbrücken, which it reached early in the evening, when I felt too knocked up to go farther, having suffered all day from my Indian plague. The station, as far it was repaired, was fitted up for the reception of wounded, and for these there was no lack of care and attention. I have endeavoured to picture the absence of warlike spirit and noisy enthusiasm, as also the presence of a somewhat anxious, silent feeling at the commencement of the late war; but certainly, at this stage of the struggle, national feeling seemed thoroughly roused. At every station the train stopped at next day, *en route* to the Rhine, men and women crowded to the windows of the carriage in which I travelled with two wounded officers (one the Adjutant of the 1-40th, hit on the Spicheren height), and an English gentleman, and pressed refreshments of all sorts on us.

On arrival in England I of course was treated with some severity, but the same was tempered with great kindness.

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## CHAPTER XII.

TRIFLING INCIDENTS ALONG THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION  
BETWEEN THE RHINE AND AMIENS—NOTICE OF THE MARCH  
OF THE GERMAN 1ST ARMY FROM METZ, TO COVER THE  
SIEGE OF PARIS FROM THE NORTH—ACTION OUTSIDE OF,  
AND CAPTURE OF AMIENS.

IN the end of September I resolved to mobilize myself again on a more permanent footing, but the delays of three of our military circumlocution Offices did not set me quite free till close on the end of the year. Private affairs induced me to make a circuit *via* the Rhine before rejoining my friends in the 8th Army Corps, who as far as I then knew, were on the march towards the northern French fortresses. Staying a day or two at Coblenz, I had the opportunity of seeing the two camps nearly finished for the prisoners. The wooden huts looked, as regards outside, much like ours at Shorncliffe, and were placed under the guns of the forts on either side of the Moselle. Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers seemed to fill the town, many passing their time in fishing in the two rivers. Numbers of the men were employed in shops, or as artificers; some also were hired as labourers in the country.

A man travelling in the same train, Rhine upwards, told me a story of a Turco, or rather Turca, having been happily confined in the fields.

Saarbrücken seemed quiet enough, but there was still a great deal of hospital work going on. Of course I paid a visit to the old ground, where the landlord of the "Bellevue" seemed flourishing. A small boy offered me lots of trophies for sale, and

was giving me an account of one of the affairs, when I pulled out my glass and told him there was a French column coming just over the Spicheren height, on which he made a face and ran away. My friend Simon, the banker, was glad to see me again, and invited me to sup with him at my own hotel. There was a lot of old cronies at table, one of whom kept nodding and winking at me, saying "Nicht so schlimm" (not so bad), till I asked what he meant. He replied, "Don't you remember my meeting you coming back with the patrole, nearly cut off by the French, and your shaking your head and saying, 'Nicht so schlimm'?" They took me out next day to share their weekly holiday, which was spent in driving some covers for roe and hares. The bag was not great, but it was interesting to look at the country, which was near the ford by which the 13th Prussian Division crossed the Saar on its march to Forbach, on the 6th August. The manners of the sportsmen, who did not over fatigue themselves, were also amusing; one carried, as well as his gun, a camp stool, on which he patiently waited till something should come to him. At the Völklingen railway station were a lot of recruits, who, as we waited for the train, formed themselves into a board of examination on my Glengarry and knickerbockers. "He must be a seaman," said one member at a little distance. "What for a landsman art thou?" asked the President approaching, "A Chinese," "No, thou art not a Chinese; I think thou art a Spaniard!"

On arrival at Metz, I met two English friends, whom, after a look at the field of the 14th, I accompanied to Thionville, the railway thereto having been re-opened some days. The inside of the fortress, which had capitulated a few days before, presented an unpleasant sight—few houses entirely untouched; about a third more or less in ruins; the cavalry riding-school was entirely unroofed; and the barracks were nearly as bad. The works of the place were little injured. I did not remark any other outward signs of distress. There seemed to be plenty to eat and drink at no unusually high prices. My friends went

on by carriage in the evening to Luxemburg, while I placed myself under the care of a Lieutenant of Cuirassiers, a capital linguist, with whom we had made acquaintance on arrival. He had come from Prince Frederic Charles's Army with a party to fetch away some horses his regiment had left in villages, to feed up after their privations and hard work before Metz. As no train started that night for Metz, we took up quarters in a public house near the station, and the evening passed in a pleasant, somewhat melo-dramatic fashion, which I should like to be able to describe as well as it pleased me. The room was pretty full of customers, talking the queer mixture of French and German that prevails there and at Luxemburg, the dozen or so of troopers coming in and out. One smooth-faced fellow, some six feet high, came in to make a complaint, blubbering like a baby, and yet I could fancy him doing his work in a charge right well. The second scene was a political dispute as to all events of the struggle, past, present, and future, between the next table and our own. The arguments of the young Frenchmen sitting at the former were vehement, and backed up by those of the stout landlord, who had the advantage of being on his legs, so that they would have pressed hard on my Cuirassier, had he not been one of those very white pets of M. de Bismark, whom Count de Palikao, to the great "sensation" of the Legislative Body on the 18th of August, declared annihilated, not one being left. It may be supposed, therefore, that he could speak as well as fight, and indeed he pleaded his cause so well, that, by the time the falling off of customers had released the daughter of the house from her duties as barmaid, an armistice was agreed to, which shifted the last scene into the parlour. There *entente cordiale* prevailed; the daughter played on the piano, the young Frenchman turned over the leaves, the Cuirassier sang accompaniments, and papa, mamma, and I, listened with admiration.

Next morning the only train available was to go as far as Longuyon on the way to Montmédy, the next small fortress to be got rid of so as to open

the northern line of communication between Metz and Rheims. I took a seat for the excursion; the day was fine, and the small portion of the Ardennes passed through were rendered still more beautiful by the columns marching from Thionville to Montmédy. They belonged, I believe, to the 7th Army Corps. Officers I saw at Longuyon said their outposts were about six or seven miles from the fortress. On the way back I had in the carriage with me some sick, returning to Germany. They admired much the comfortable padding of the carriage, but were still more expressive of delight at the prospect of returning to their dear home. They were well provided with blankets, of which I was glad to accept a share, having left my kit at Metz, and the afternoon being frosty. The Cuirassier's horse-boxes were attached to the train at Thoinville and dropped at the station outside Metz. Their officer was kind enough to invite me to accompany him, but I dared not yet go out of reach of the *London Gazette*. Waiting for a sight of that, I spent a couple of days trying to recognise portions of the fields of the 16th and 18th August, but to little good, especially the second day, on which it snowed hard and made a view to any distance impossible. I cannot say I noticed many outward and visible signs of distress in the town or neighbourhood, but then I was not on the look out for them. Some members of the Society of Friends who were there distributing charity, were, I understand, more successful.<sup>1</sup> I suppose also the employés of the English ambulance had something to do; there were plenty of them, and they seemed very comfortable. The Hotel de l'Europe I found much infected with socialist principles. During my absence at Thoinville one of the waiters had done me the honour to select from my baggage the only good necktie, and did not hesitate to wear it, as he

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<sup>1</sup> Riding through Gorze one day last summer, I observed on the village town-hall the following inscription. On one side:—"Aux Ouvriers de la Grande Bretagne et de toutes les possessions Anglaises," and on the other, "A leurs Bienfaiteurs Suisses, Anglais et Luxembourgeois"—(following both) "Les Ouvriers de la Commune et du Canton de Gorze Reconnaisants."



smilingly received me on my return. I will do him the justice so say that, on my remonstrating, he returned it neatly folded up. Troops in the town were hard at work drilling. A Battalion of the Queen Augusta's regiment of Guards in garrison looked splendid.

Having heard news of the capture of Amiens by the 1st Army, and also having read that I was my own master, I started on the night of the 3rd December for that place, and found railway communication all right as far as Chantilly, whence the line to Creil and northwards was, however, interrupted. On the way to the former place, which the train reached about 11 p.m., what turned out afterwards to be a cigar bagman hearing my intentions had tacked on to me. We walked about the town for nearly an hour seeking room in an hotel in vain, and had some trouble with the only Prussian gendarme I have ever seen the worse for liquor, and before whom my companion literally trembled with fear and obsequiousness. At last we got a private, billeted near the railway station, to receive us into his room with three beds, and to let us have a share in the mattresses, all of which he had heaped on his own. Next day, up to 2.30 p.m., was spent in the vain hope of a train getting on to Creil. Meanwhile, a Jäger, of what battalion I forget, with a pass to shoot game for his officers, then before Paris, put in his word, which was that I should return to Crépy-en-Valois, whence I might make my way *via* Compiègne and Montdidier, and by road to my objective. There was nothing for it, and at Crépy the very civil Stage Commander at once "required" a cart, in which, accompanied by huntsman and bagman, and driven by a peasant, who, to judge from the remonstrances addressed to his horse in regard of laziness, and to me on my sneezing, must have been of a very pious nature, I got through the beautiful forest to Compiègne itself. Next morning, after wavering between the invitation of the huntsman to shoot in the forest and the pressure put on me by the bagman to go halves in a carriage he had hired, I yielded to the latter, though I considered myself rather done, when

I afterwards knew what his big boxes contained. At Moreuil where we passed the night, my friend was conducting himself in rather a bullying way, when I remarked *sotto voce*, "You had better keep quiet, I don't see any Prussians about." This put him into a terrible fright, insomuch that he proposed pushing on at once to Amiens, which the coachman, however, objected to, so that we had to seek an inn. We did this with great precaution, and, when successful, entering the kitchen, the bagman asked in a most humble manner if we could have supper, "Ah, that troubles us, we don't work now more than we please," replied the host giving the fire a vicious poke, and glowering at us in a way which made my companion shudder. On being conducted to our rooms by the sorrowful-looking hostess, "I don't like the look of that woman! Have you got a revolver?" Some troopers appearing in the stables reassured him, and I must do him the justice to say that he knew how to get the best of wine and viands served us.

At Amiens, which we reached next morning, were in garrison the head-quarters, and a Lancer Brigade of the 3rd Cavalry Division, with the 3rd Infantry Brigade, which General von Manteuffel had left behind on continuing his march into Normandy with the rest of the 1st Army. I was delighted to find my Saarbrücken friends of the 7th Lancers, including Colonel von Pestel,<sup>1</sup> messing at the Hotel du Rhin, where also were some officers of the English ambulance. Curious it was that while the former were expressing their anxiety during the day as to the fate of two of their comrades, who had been sent with a squadron to the neighbourhood of Péronne, the latter were in the evening able to reassure them by producing a London paper of the 5th, giving news from Lille that two Prussian Officers had been incarcerated in the former little fortress.

It does not come in my way to describe at all how the duty was done during the blockade of Metz and its forts, commencing immediately after the battle

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<sup>1</sup> His death by a franc-tireur's shot during the blockade of Metz had been reported by some correspondents.

of Gravelotte and ending with the capitulation of the French Army called "of the Rhine." Nor is it for me to express an opinion as to whether Bazaine could or could not have forced his way through the Prussian lines with at least a portion of his force, but I cannot resist a little attempt at sentimental writing suggested to me when last looking at the statue of old Ney. What struck me was that one would have felt inclined to forgive the vandalism of the Parisian rabble in pulling down the column of the Place Vendôme, if before that act the Army in Metz, disgusted with their wretched imitations of the grand old chiefs of the first Empire, had torn from his pedestal and placed at their head, the figure with bayonet at the charge of "the bravest of the brave," trusting that his spirit would show a way to escape from the inglorious inaction their Commander had accepted as his rôle.

Having, however, left my friends of the 8th Prussian Army Corps before the above-mentioned fortress, and not having been able to meet them till they were engaged in the duty of covering the siege of Paris from northern attempts to raise it, I had better try to connect my narrative by a short notice of their movements in the interval.

During the investment, this corps stood for the most part with head-quarters at Ars-sur-Moselle, and had next to nothing to do in the way of fighting. Part of it was employed at one time in escorting prisoners towards the old frontier. I have no statistics as to casualties, but I believe that many sick were sent to Germany, while many convalescents returned thence to duty. Of the latter, the 40th Regiment received back, at different times, as many as 448 men, as well as 279 recruits.

It is known that on the nomination of General von Steinmetz to a Military Government in East Prussia, the 1st Army ceased to exist as a body distinct from the 2nd, and that all the Army Corps left round Metz were under the chief command of Prince Frederic Charles. After the capitulation, however,—which, by the way, for the subsequent success of the Prussian arms did not take place much too soon—it being

necessary to despatch the troops now available to north and south-west, much as a company throws out flankers to free an advanced section in danger of being surrounded, the command of the 1st Army was revived (but minus, I believe, the 7th Corps and the 1st Cavalry Division) under General von Manteuffel.

The enemy, against whom it was required to show a front on, to use another comparison, the old principle, laid down for siege operations, of lines of circumvallation,<sup>1</sup> but with reference to covering the northern portion of the army besieging Paris, in this case very much extended, was the 22nd French Corps in course of formation, under protection of the fortresses, in the Departments of the North and Pas de Calais, with advanced posts already as far south as Amiens, Péronne, and La Fère. The country to be crossed till reaching the Oise at La Fère and Compiègne, offered no obstacle in the shape of an enemy in the field, and the still unreduced fortresses near the lines of march were of little importance. In consequence, however, of there being Franc-tireurs about, the troops were directed to march with the precautions proper to a state of war. The bulk of the Army commenced the movement on the 7th November, along three lines, the right or northern of which was followed by the 1st Corps, the centre by the 3rd Cavalry Division, and the left by the 8th Corps.

The cavalry and part of the 1st Corps had already moved westwards to the longitude of St. Menéhould, and patrolled the country about. The 1st Corps skirted, I believe, the forest of the Ardennes, and passing Laon, came on the enemy in La Fère. The fact of the little fortress being garrisoned caused a Brigade of the 1st

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<sup>1</sup> For the benefit of non-professional readers I give the following definition, to be found also in nearly every work on fortification—from "An Universal Military Dictionary, by Captain George Smith, "Woolwich 1778:" "Circumvallation . . . . Implies a fortification "of earth, consisting of a parapet and trench, made round the town "intended to be besieged, when any molestation is apprehended "from parties of the enemy, which may march to relieve the place " . . . . The line of circumvallation, which is to be further "distant from the place than the camp of the besiegers, ought much "more to be out of the reach of its artillery."

Corps to be left behind and withdrawn from a share in the battle of Amiens. Simultaneously with that affair, and after a short bombardment, the place capitulated.

The 8th Corps marched by Verdun—which capitulated on the 8th, thereby freeing four battalions of the 15th Division, and some Engineers—the great Mourmelon (standing camp of Châlons), Rheims, and Soissons, reaching Compiègne on the 21st, on which day the principal part of the troops crossed the Oise, and commencing their wheel to the right on the 1st Corps as pivot, pushed the advanced guards as far as the line, Estrées-St. Denis,—Mouchy.

The length of each of the 12 days' marches, following the crow's flight from halt to halt, had been on an average 15 English miles, but road windings and movements to and from places where regiments or brigades formed up must have rendered them much longer. Therefore it was considered advisable, on the 14th, to order an extra ration of meat to be issued to the men on the four following days. By the time the corps reached the Oise, the number of sick had increased to between 700 and 800 in the regiments of infantry, to between 80 and 90 in those of cavalry, and to about 100 in the artillery detachments. The halts on the 12th and 16th were devoted mainly to the repairing or renewing of shoes. On the latter occasion, in and near Rheims, boots were ordered to be sent after the troops to Soissons, besides which the provision columns were replenished.

I have mentioned the instructions at commencement for the order of march. On the 11th these were supplemented by orders to march in complete preparation, therefore as many parallel columns to be formed as circumstances would allow, and again, on the 20th, when advancing beyond Soissons, the troops were directed to march with increased care, as they were entering districts little visited previously by Prussians, and might expect to meet the enemy at any time. It was prescribed to each infantry division, in case it used only one road, to form an advanced guard of three battalions, three squadrons, and one or two batteries

under a Brigadier; when several roads were to be used by the different columns, the principle of supporting advanced cavalry by infantry was to be observed; or, should that be impossible, the former were to avoid large and populous villages. On the 17th the Jäger Battalion of the Corps and a troop of Horse Artillery had been attached to the 3rd Cavalry Division. Directions were also given to hand over, with the view of procuring for them a trip to the rear, to the fixed authorities at the stages (Etappen), such young Frenchmen as might be suspected of watching the troops with the intention of reporting their movements.

Simultaneously with the concentration of the 8th Corps round Compiègne, the three brigades of the 1st Corps arrived at Noyon, while the 3rd Cavalry Division occupied Ham, Roye, and Montdidier.

While the 22nd and 23rd were halting days for the 8th Corps, patrols from the 15th Division examined the country as far as Montdidier and established communication with the 3rd Cavalry Division towards Roye; those from the 16th clearing the left-front and feeling the Saxon Cavalry<sup>1</sup> at Beauvais, Clermont, and Mouy. Two bridges, which had been thrown across the Oise, were removed.

On the 24th an advance was made, continuing the wheel, to the line; Cuvilly St Just en Chaussée, but head-quarters remained at Compiègne, where also a field hospital was established. Relays were placed towards Noyons, to provide for communication by the rear of the 3rd Cavalry Division with the 1st Corps.

On the 25th the head-quarters of both the 1st Army and the 8th Corps, came to Montdidier, the 15th Division with Staff at Fignières occupied a circle of which the most northern point was le Hamel, and the 16th, established at le Mesnil St. Firmin and neighbourhood, detached the 70th Regiment with three squadrons of the 9th Hussars and a heavy battery to protect the left flank at Breteuil. Cavalry patrols therefrom were ordered to break up the Rouen railway line between Amiens and Poix. The 1st Corps came to Roye.

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<sup>1</sup> Covering the siege of Paris.

According to French accounts, and following principally General Faidherbe's narrative,<sup>1</sup> the then Commander of the 22nd Corps d'Armée, General Farre, had on the 24th, as available to support the garrison of Amiens, three brigades of a total strength of 17,500 men, and 36 guns. A fourth brigade is mentioned as in course of formation, but able only to furnish three battalions to guard the passages of the Somme between Péronne and Corbie. The garrison just mentioned is given at 8,000 men strong, and a seventh battery joined during the battle.

The troops are described as being on the 23rd hardly concentrated in a position, of which the front to south-east extended from Corbie by Villers Bretonneux, Cachy, and Gentelles to the Avre stream, and a reconnoitering party therefrom, as having on the 24th a successful engagement with the Prussians near Mézières,<sup>2</sup> driving them back on Bouchoir, with seven carts of dead and wounded. A German account does mention that the advanced guard of the 3rd Cavalry Division on that day drove back towards Amiens six French Battalions, with some artillery, which had come out to near the former place.

During the March of the 15th Prussian Division on the 25th, detachments of the 7th Hussars and Fusilier Battalion of the 68th Regiment fell in with some Mobile Guards, who retired fighting, but inflicting hardly any loss.

Although the Amiens garrison had taken the precaution of throwing up a long line of earthworks, extending across the approaches from the south, and furnishing them with 12 guns, the Commander of the 22nd Corps seems to have expected the more serious attack from the east, and to have been most solicitous for freedom of passage to the north of the Somme. On the 26th therefore, while his 1st Brigade was in Amiens, his 2nd occupied Boves on the Avre, Canons on the Somme, and neighbourhood, his 3rd being distributed along the front above mentioned.

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<sup>1</sup> *Campagne de l'Armée du Nord en 1870-1871*—par le Général de division L. Faidherbe—Paris, 1871.

<sup>2</sup> A village—not the fortress.

The 1st Prussian Corps on that day advanced towards Luce, while the 3rd Cavalry Division took ground to the right towards the Somme for the purpose of covering the right flank; General von Manteuffel's plan being to operate with the 1st Corps across the Luce, and with the 8th between the Avre and Celle.

Orders were received by the latter, therefore, to move:—Head-quarters and 15th Division to Moreuil, with advanced guard as far north as Hailles and Thennes; a detachment on the right flank by Davenescourt, on Plessiers-Rosainvillers; the 16th Division on Ailly sur Noye, with a detachment pushed as far to the left flank as Essertaux. The advanced guard of the right column (its Infantry, I believe, furnished by the 68th Regiment) under Major-General von Strubberg, came on forces of the enemy, estimated by the Prussians as within 2,000, near the junction of the Luce with the Avre, and drove them back on the heights of Fouen-Camps; then, being ordered to take post for the night in the neighbourhood of Thennes and Domart, had to keep off, by hard fighting, attacks coming from Gentelles and Cachy, suffering a loss of three Officers and eight men killed; three and 52 wounded; two men missing. General Faidherbe describes the Prussian attack as directed against Fouen-camps and Boves, but arrested by tirailleurs of a regiment of the line, and a battalion of Chasseurs, and while regretting the loss of a Field-Officer, considers the engagement as having been to the French advantage. Anyhow, what occurred induced General Farre to contract his extended line by concentrating the 3rd Brigade at Villers-Bretonneux,<sup>1</sup> and to look out for his right flank. The 1st Brigade was brought out from Amiens into position, between the 2nd and 3rd; Cachy and Gentelles being strengthened before night; and the following morning the garrison, reinforced afterwards by the 12-pr. battery which arrived from Douay, marched out to

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<sup>1</sup> I do not quite understand whether or not Corbie was temporarily abandoned.



the intrenchments, and sent an outpost to south of Dury. Villers-Bretonneux was to be the pivot on which the field force, if too hard pressed at other points, should wheel backwards to a second position, of which Longueau was to be the right, and behind which numerous passages were preserved for crossing the Somme. The earth-works were to be made the best of by the garrison for as long as possible.

The rainy weather is described as having made the country heavy, and as having caused doubts amongst the French as to whether the Prussians would attack on the morrow. During the night, however, it cleared.

On the morning of the 27th the 1st Prussian Corps and the 3rd Cavalry Division, which latter was formed up in the right-rear of the former between Harbonnières and Bayonvillers, advanced against the French line Villers-Bretonneux—Gentelles. Some cavalry were sent towards the Somme to look out for a crossing, and try to cut off railway communication with Arras.

On this flank hard fighting took place, of which I do not know any of the details, except that at or near Villers-Bretonneux, front had to be shown to the right against an enemy's column advancing from the direction of Corbie, and that the infantry had hard work to hold the former place till the cavalry division menaced the French left, and completed the success of the 1st Corps.

The 8th Army Corps had been directed by General von Manteuffel to march diagonally to its left-front and occupy Fouen-Camps, Sains, and Hébecourt. The operation was, as I have learnt, carried out as follows. To the 15th Division were assigned the two first points, one for each brigade, while the 16th was ordered to the last, whence to push advanced guards to St. Fuscien and Dury, as also laterally a detachment to Plachy and Bacouel with instructions to break up the Rouen line of railway. The left advanced guard to reconnoitre the reported intrenchments north of Dury.

About 10.30 a.m. the 30th Brigade attacked the enemy standing in force on the wooded heights left

of the Noye, along the line Fouen-camps le Parcelet, having first shelled him by a battery from the other bank. About noon the enemy was driven from le Parcelet back on Boves. The 29th had meanwhile reached Sains and sent an advanced guard to St. Fuscien, when the Brigadier received orders to reinforce in the direction of Boves the troops of the 30th Brigade and 1st Corps, who, judging from the sound of artillery fire coming from the east, were at the time sharply engaged. Fourteen companies and two batteries started on this duty, moving part by le Cambos, part through a hollow to the right, and worked to such effect that the ruins outside Boves, the village itself, and that of St. Nicolas were presently carried by the infantry of both brigades. Strong columns of French Infantry, accompanied by two batteries from the direction partly of Gentelles, attempting to renew the struggle, had to give way before the accurate firing of the artillery of the division and to retire towards Amiens. Some railway trains were observed approaching from that town, and carrying troops, but had to flinch in the same way, while a heavy battery of the enemy playing on the position had little or no effect. As darkness set in, the duel, which had been kept up for some time between the division and the enemy in the Gentelles woods, ceased, and the former established itself for the night on the position, the capture of which had cost 13 Officers and 246 men *hors de combat*. Prisoners to the number of 400 had been taken.

On the left the 16th Division, marching by Grattepanche and St. Sauflieu, had news from its advanced feelers of the enemy being in the latter place and in Rumigny. No serious opposition, however, was met with till Hébecourt was neared. That village and a wood behind it was strongly occupied by battalions of Chasseurs and Mobile Guards, aided by some of the inhabitants. The 32nd Brigade, supported by the fire of the divisional batteries, carried both village and wood after an obstinate fight. The 40th<sup>1</sup> account tells me

<sup>1</sup> The advance of the leading battalion was in much the same order as I have described its being from Gorze on the 16th August, i.e. the right-centre company leading.

that they found the rifle fire, poured on them from the wood when only 300 paces distant, as usual much too high. Two squadrons of the 9th Hussars found an opportunity to charge and cut up some companies of Chasseurs. The division continuing the advance through Dury, came in front of the entrenchments, of which General Faidherbe, by the way, describes the profile to have been feeble, but which my recollection—having seen them before the work of demolition commenced—tells me, were for the purpose of covering artillery and infantry, as also for sweeping the ground in front, both thick and commanding, though the exterior slopes were hardly, if at all, scarped. It must have been about 1 p.m. that the batteries of the division, reinforced by two troops of Horse Artillery from the Reserve, in all 36 guns, unlimbered in the open, covered by detachments of infantry. Of these, two companies of the 70th Regiment stormed and entrenched themselves in a churchyard only 300 paces from the enemy's fortification, while two of the 40th established themselves in some brick kilns east of the Amiens road. It appears that not till about 2 p.m., did the French bring artillery fire to bear upon these troops, though that of musketry was heavy. Probably the battery which arrived from Douay was not in position till then, but where were the 12 guns described as having been previously placed on the entrenchments? Perhaps they stood further east. The projectiles of both sorts, according to the 40th, continued to fly very high; and one company—which advanced with a light battery some 300 paces from the brick kilns about 3.30, to look out for a rush from the trenches, suffered no loss. Still, between the time the reconnaissance commenced and dark, the Prussian Artillery could not succeed in silencing the French guns under cover, and General von Barnekow contented himself with holding Dury, and the little forward positions of the churchyard<sup>1</sup> and brick kilns. Picquets watched the

<sup>1</sup> A letter published in the *Nouvelliste de Rouen* of the 1st December, states that the 43rd French Regiment of the line scaled the walls of what I suppose was the same cemetery, and

entrenchments, and established communication with the 15th Division.

The losses on the left, including those of the two batteries from the Reserve, came to 11 Officers, 184 men, killed and wounded. The 40th had 3 men killed, 1 Officer and 19 men wounded, 1 missing. The four divisional batteries had 2 men and 49 horses killed, 4 Officers (1 died afterwards), 38 men, and 25 horses wounded. They fired away 2,097 shells. The total Prussian loss on both wings came to 74 Officers and 1,300 men, killed and wounded.

All accounts agree, I think, in giving such French troops of the line as were present, and more particularly the marines and sailors, credit for making a good stand on this occasion, but the conduct of the Mobile Guards and Franc-tireurs was blamed by correspondents at the time, and is alluded to by General Faidherbe, with reference to one incident, as being very unsteady. Villers-Bretonneux and Gentelles appear to have been held till dark, but to judge from a correspondent's letter,<sup>1</sup> ordinary outpost precautions were neglected at the former point, and the constantly quoted authority's description of the performances of part of the 1st Brigade, at and in front of the latter, gives hardly a satisfactory reason for its Commander, General Lecointe, if previously successful, retreating as far as Longueau.

The Commander-in-Chief appears to have personally directed the defence of Villers-Bretonneux, and to have retired with the 3rd Brigade—the Commander of which had been wounded—or part of it, on Corbie that night. This village on the Somme, Longueau, and the entrenchments north of Dury, were probably occupied during the night by the regulars of the naval and military services; but the patriotism of the improvised warriors does not seem to have prevented them from going to seek the nourishment and the repose, of which they had an excessive need, a need which to judge

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bayonnetted "all which found itself there." Perhaps the writer was romantic, and had a taste for horrors beyond those of war.

<sup>1</sup> To *l'Echo du Nord*, copied into the *Brussels Nord* of the 2nd December, 1870.

from their own news writers, had from first to last a great effect on the modern Gauls.

A council of war held at Amiens that night decided, with one dissentient voice, against prolonging the defence of the position, and the result of the conference having been telegraphed to General Farre, he returned orders for a general retreat, leaving a garrison in the citadel only. This movement was carried out next day in four columns, with more or less regularity, according to the respective characters of the troops composing them. Their loss is given as 266 killed, and 1,117 wounded, besides a thousand or so missing. A Prussian account telegraphed from Versailles on the 4th December that nine field-pieces and much war material were found after the evacuation of the battle-field, but then General Faidherbe says that the 22nd Corps did not leave a single one of the former, and gives utterance to complaints of ammunition failing.

As the strength of the Prussian 1st Army on the 21st was—1st Corps 19,148 men, 8th Corps 19,096 men, 3rd Cavalry Division 2,210 men, with in all 180 guns, and as the brigade left at La Fère must be deducted, the force on the 27th cannot have exceeded 39,000 men and 168 guns.<sup>1</sup>

While the bulk thereof was engaged as has been described, the left flank detachment had destroyed railway and telegraphic communication with Rouen, and by reconnaissances ascertained that Poix and Quevauvillers were unoccupied, though some Francs-tireurs were encountered at Namps au Mont.

Amongst the arrangements for the 28th, it was intended that one division of the 8th Corps should take up a position in front of the enemy to the left of the 1st, whose attack from the right should be supported by the other, but the 16th Division discovered early in the morning that the enemy had evacuated the lines north of Dury, leaving six guns, five ammunition waggons, besides casks of ammunition and such like. During the forenoon the citadel was summoned, first verbally and

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<sup>1</sup> Probably more than two batteries were detached.

then in writing, but in the evening a refusal to surrender was returned. The town, however, was occupied.

On the 29th the citadel was surrounded by the 40th, and firing on it commenced, directed so as not to injure the town. The Commandant fell mortally wounded on the rampart. With the exception of troops told off for the reduction of the citadel, the 8th Corps was distributed—head-quarters and 16th Division in Amiens, with detachments in villages to the west, the 15th at and in the neighbourhood of Wailly, a village south-west of the battle-field, so as to front towards Rouen. The outposts, which had been furnished by the 16th Division north of Amiens, were relieved by the 3rd Brigade (1st Corps). The transportable wounded were despatched to Compiègne on carts, which on their return were to bring stores thence.

For the bombardment of the citadel on the 30th, under direction of the Commandant of Artillery with the 8th Corps, had been told off eleven batteries covered by three battalions and two squadrons, some of which were in position, and a battalion, to which were attached sappers with ladders, was held in readiness for a possible escalade; but the first thing in the morning the white flag was seen flying, and a negotiation followed ending in the surrender of the citadel with 30 smooth-bore pieces of ordnance. 11 Officers and about 400 men became prisoners of war. The 15th Division threw out detachments to Poix, Moyencourt and Courcelles.

Réconnoissances by the 1st Corps and 3rd Cavalry Division were pushed northwards, but I don't know how far.

## CHAPTER XIII.

GERMAN 1ST ARMY SECURES THE SIEGE OF PARIS FROM  
INTERRUPTION UP THE SEINE—FRENCH ARMY OF THE  
NORTH RE-ORGANIZED BY GENERAL FAIDHERBE—MOVEMENTS  
CONSEQUENT THEREON.

THE duty of frustrating an attempt to disturb the siege of Paris from the north had now been discharged, and leaving the garrison I have mentioned in the important post he had become master of, General von Manteuffel proceeded to perform a similar but easier task at Rouen, for the north-west rear of the besieging army. The whole of the 8th Corps took part in this movement, which commenced on the 1st December, and after by trifling engagements on the 4th and 5th having gained possession of Rouen, was directed on Dieppe, more, I fancy, with a view to subsistence, than for any strictly strategical purpose.

Much time, I must say, I somewhat wasted at Amiens. At first I hoped to get on in the mail cart to the army in Normandy, but found that the bags and escort took up all the room. Then I was given to understand that the line to Rouen would be immediately in working order, but the same day that the first train started, I was informed that the 8th Army Corps was on the march back, one division being directed on Montdidier. I had the opportunity, however, of visiting the citadel, the battle-fields (though being then in possession of none of the details of the action, I could not make an altogether satisfactory study), and some wounded friends lying in the villages from which the 8th Army Corps attacked on the 27th.

One of them, the Adjutant of the 9th Hussars, had

received a bullet in the breast, passing through the centre of his iron cross without injuring the points thereof. Before I left Amiens, he was well enough to start for home. Through want of information, however, to my great regret, I missed seeing, until too late, an Artillery Officer alongside whom I had passed some time in the early actions, and who died of his wounds just about the day I left Amiens. Almost all of these were provided with, or had the opportunity of receiving warm clothing and other comforts from the English ambulance. This particular branch of the national undertaking had been established in the town some time before the Prussians arrived, and since the actions had been—nay, were still as I could observe—doing good work in the town and surrounding villages, where wounded lay. All accounts I had from the employés, almost all army men, in regard to the way in which their help was accepted by the authorities of either combatant, went to strengthen my, by this time, pretty pronounced pro-Prussian sympathies. The wife of the Officer at the head of the detachment, who had gone often out to the villages where lay many French wounded, told me also that she had had much reason to complain of the supineness of both French medical authorities and rich inhabitants, in regard to their suffering fellow-countrymen.

As far as I could judge, the feelings of the Amiens citizens—at least of the higher classes—were not unfriendly towards their visitors as long as these were civil, and I heard of only one case in which one of the latter was at all overbearing. Then his host told me, "With his tea in the morning, I sent him the hardest biscuit I could find, the strongest butter, and I did put a hair in it." By the bye, I do remember one landlady did complain that the soldiers would go to bed with their boots on. Myself was introduced by Voigt of the 7th Lancers, now on the staff of the cavalry division, to his host, a gentleman who had relations with England, and had sent his family there after the war had broken out. He presented me to a lady to whom he acted as a sort of guardian, and in whose house he lived during the absence of his



family. There I received hospitality such as I do not remember meeting with elsewhere than in India. They received voluntarily, and tended carefully, two sick Officers who had to be left behind on the troops marching out. At their table I made the acquaintance of the Chaplain of the Division, who was kind enough to lend me his carriage for two or three trips I made in the country.

For some days Amiens seemed very quiet, and with no very great stretch of imagination, a foreigner might have supposed the presence of a German-speaking garrison to be part of a normal state of things. Outside the town the earthworks were being fast levelled, and inside the shops were open. English newspapers came regularly *via* Boulogne or Calais till, I think, the 9th. On that day disquieting reports began to circulate about the town, some caused by the renewed preparations in the northern fortresses for a struggle southwards, some by the sorties of the Paris garrison. Amongst the very absurd ones I have on my notes, it was said that Queen Augusta had come to Versailles to beg the king to make peace; also that further north it was stated that General Trochu had broken through to Amiens. That night, too, a Lancer Subaltern came in from the eastern outposts, bearing the Péronne Commandant's refusal of the Prussian Divisional Commander's demand for the liberation of the Captain and Subaltern, who when patrolling on the 3rd, had thought fit to ride in with a flag of truce and summon the fortress to surrender. Their squadron had been afterwards fired on at Villers-Carbonnel, and had lost some horses. Other patrols on the south side of the Somme had also been fired on at different villages. On the 10th the inhabitants had already news of the 22nd Corps having been successful at Ham. On the 12th, in consequence of the way in which the Lancer patrols had been annoyed by the fire of Francs-tireurs on the Péronne road, and particularly at Foucancourt, a small mixed detachment with two guns, under the Major of the 7th, was despatched to punish that village. I had notice in time to have accompanied the expedition if

I had chosen, but I was not over well, and had besides no particular fancy for witnessing a mere act of reprisals. The next day, on approaching the village, the detachment received from Mobile Guards and *Francs-tireurs* a fire which wounded badly nine men of the infantry, and lost them a couple of horses, after which they set fire to the place, and executed all prisoners taken in arms. On the 14th, railway communication with Rouen commenced.

The 15th was an unquiet day; the populace continued to circulate and believe the most exaggerated rumours, though a proclamation warning against both was published by the Prussian General. That something was in the wind, I could feel, but knew no more than that the bulk of the troops were to march next day towards Montdidier, and were likely to join the 8th Corps in that quarter. Colonel von Pestel invited me to accompany him for that purpose.

On the 5th of the month, General Faidherbe had assumed command of the territorial military division in the north, and by the 8th the re-organized field force, or 22nd Corps, was brought to a strength of 30,000 men and 60 guns in 3 divisions. Marching south by St. Quentin, and having obtained the surrender of Ham on the 10th, he reconnoitred La Fère on the 12th and 13th. Whether at that time, as further on in the winter, it entered into his plans to march past the right of the 1st Prussian Army, and by coming down on the rear of the besieging army create a diversion in favour of the Paris garrison, the General in his pamphlet does not say. Anyhow, on the 14th, he resolved to change direction to the right on Amiens, before, too, he had any word that the Prussians were returning from the sea coast. That news reached him as he approached Amiens, but on what day is not stated. Thereby, and by the fact of the citadel being occupied by a garrison which threatened to fire on the town if entered by an enemy, he was induced to withdraw across the Somme and establish his troops in the strong position enclosed in the angle formed by that river and the brook Hallue.

There the Army of the North was reinforced by a 4th Division (Mobile Guards only) with 18 guns, and was told off into two corps. The strength not being given, may be taken to have been 40,000 men. Hardly any cavalry was comprised therein. Up to the 15th it was, I believe, the plan of the Commander of the 1st Prussian Army that while the head-quarters of the 1st Corps remained in Normandy, the 8th should return into Picardy, marching in two columns, of which one composed of the 16th Division and the Reserve Artillery, making a circuit by and possibly occupying Abbeville, should reach Amiens by the 19th. On the date I am writing about, however, news came to Dieppe, where the head-quarters of the corps were, that the French North Army seemed to be pushing past La Fère against Soissons and Paris, and orders for the 16th Division to march at once on Beauvais, while the 15th should continue its movement, already commenced, on Montdidier. To the corps were attached the troops then garrisoning Amiens, in which were to be left three battalions, two batteries and a Foot Artillery Detachment, while the remainder were directed to march on Roye, and there communicate with the 15th Division. The Brigade of the 3rd Cavalry Division, which had marched into Normandy, was also ordered to the same neighbourhood.

I do not know what instructions were received that day in Amiens, but anyhow the garrison was ordered by its own Commander to march next day, leaving only two companies of infantry, one company of Fortress Artillery, and an Engineer Detachment in the citadel. A sort of P.D.A. card was left on the inhabitants, telling them to keep quiet and expect the Prussian Force back again before long.

I knew nothing at the time of the above dispositions beyond that the troops were to join the 8th Corps as it returned from Normandy, and gladly accepted Colonel von Pestel's invitation for the 16th.

On that morning we roused at seven to march, as I believed, on Moreuil. The troops, 5 battalions, 8 squadrons, and 3 batteries, formed on the boulevard and

the advanced guard, furnished by the 14th Lancers, moved out on what after accompanying them a short way I found to be the Ailly road. Surmising that the 7th might be forming part of a not quite parallel column, I crossed country till I could get a view of the Moreuil road, on which seeing nothing but flankers, I returned to the column, and was reassured by General von der Groeben, Commander of the 3rd Cavalry Division, to whom I was then presented, that my friends were following in rear of the infantry. Nothing of the enemy had been seen that morning, but he was believed to be in Roye. To previous news that troops had been sent from Bordeaux to Dunkirk, some confirmation was added by the fact of a soldier from Perpignan having been killed or captured, I forget which.

The head of the column reached Ailly-sur-Noye about 1 p.m., and was quartered there. I had to go back to Jumel to find the billets of the 7th Lancers. My kit, as usual, was missing, though the boots had assured me in the morning that he had put it on one of their carts. The billet was in the house of the Ex-Mayor, who informed us he had been turned out on account of his Bonapartist sympathies. Straw was the couch, and a stalwart Lancer my bed-fellow.

On the 17th the troops were roused at 6 a.m., and the column formed quietly without signals on the Montdidier road, to which the advanced guard, which had lain at Merville-au-bois, towards the supposed direction of the enemy, came across. At Grivesnes the column changed direction to the left, and after passing through some beautiful defiles, the head halted at Bouillancourt. That morning I fortunately walked with the Horse Battery of the 7th Artillery Regiment, which had been detached from the Corps of that number, to the 3rd Cavalry Division; for on the way the Captain told me that on one of his waggons he had got some kit which a man had brought in a great hurry, just as they were marching out of Amiens, and said belonged to the 7th Lancers. It turned out to be mine, and getting a couple of lads to carry it for me, I returned to Grivesnes, where I found the staff of the Lancers quartered in a château, the family being at home and receiving

those who must have been unwelcome guests, still in a most friendly manner. I felt my own position very uncomfortable, and would willingly have sought lodgings elsewhere, but it was too late. In the course of the day, when orders came out, Major General von Mirus, Commander of a Brigade in the 3rd Cavalry Division, was directed to return with the 7th Lancers and the Infantry to Amiens, while the remainder were to move east of Montdidier. Colonel von Pestel advised me to make use of a sanitary detachment then in the village, which was to follow in that direction, where the 8th Army Corps was at once expected. Consequently, the troops rousing long before daylight next morning, I had a very unpleasant search in the dark and slush for the above detachment, the existence of which was by one person denied, and by another re-asserted, besides meeting with humorous remarks as to my appearance, one being that I must be "Garibaldi sein Sohn." At dawn I found that I need not have given myself so much trouble, for the sanitary gentlemen did not turn out till daylight. Proceeding towards Montdidier we were met by a Hussar with orders for the detachment to turn into quarters at Fontaine, a village a little way short, on which I trudged on to Montdidier, being overtaken first by a half-squadron of the 14th Lancers at a trot, the Captain of which asked me to go on with him to Faverolles, which I should have gladly done, had he not found that his second horse was absent; then by General von der Groeben, accompanied by a single orderly. He told me that General von Manteuffel had ordered the bulk of the troops back to Amiens, and that his, the 3rd Cavalry Division, was to be re-formed. There was no news of the enemy that morning. I got to Montdidier about nine, and found there the head-quarters of the 15th Division, which had arrived the day previously and was then pushing the 30th Brigade to Moreuil, the 16th, with the staff of the Army Corps having moved by more northern roads, as soon as the change of direction by the French Army was known, so that I might have saved myself some trouble by staying in Amiens. After walking out again to Fontaine for my baggage, and back, I spent the rest of that day and

the best part of the next in the pretty little town Montdidier, very uncertain as to what I should do, and somewhat perplexed by the various reports flying about. One was that the 7th Army Corps had had fighting near Ham; another that French troops had occupied Amiens. The head-quarters of the cavalry division were, I believe, established at Arvillers. Where I stopped, the inn was comfortable; the landlord had a half-sporting look, and spoke English. The latter accomplishment had, he told me, cost him at the beginning of the war, a visit to Lille as a suspected spy.

Towards evening of the 19th, I was introduced to an Officer of the 15th Divisional Staff, about to start for the head-quarters of the Army Corps to fetch orders. Accepting gladly the offer of a seat in his carriage, I was taken, by him, back to Ailly, where some of the Officers I had before known, arranged for me a shake-down. Before starting in the morning for Amiens, the permission for me to accompany his Army Corps was renewed by General von Goeben, whom I found kind and pleasant as ever, though he struck me as looking somewhat worn by the exertions and cares of the past five months. At Amiens, to which I followed and got my baggage carried by the 72nd Regiment, I found the 40th drawn up on the boulevard, waiting for billets. "Lord Jesus! Thunderweather once more! The Captain back again!" with hearty welcomes greeted me. The regiment appeared pretty strong, and all ranks had a tough look about them that I liked. I was delighted to find Rosen a Major, and wearing the Iron Cross of the 1st Class,<sup>1</sup> won on that memorable afternoon between Gorze and Rezonville. The landlord of the Hotel du Rhin told me that there was no room for me, the whole being taken up for General von Manteuffel, who rode

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<sup>1</sup> During a discussion in the House of Commons as to Her Majesty's permission being granted or refused to certain Englishmen to receive from the Emperor of Germany, and wear the above decoration, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in the usual half-informed way that our Parliamentary officials constantly speak, declared that the Iron Cross was not an order, but a war medal. As a matter of fact, a war medal struck out of captured ordnance has been issued, and those more particularly decorated are styled "Knights of the Iron Cross."

in during the day, but the old chambermaid gave me one notwithstanding. The 7th Lancers, however, were not there this time, although they had returned to Amiens in one march on the 18th, but were distributed on outpost duty in different directions. Just before the re-occupation of the town, some of the enemy (perhaps General Faiderbe reconnoitering), had been seen from, and fired at by the citadel. The wealthier classes were reported to have been in some dread as to the conduct of the lower ones, many being out of work.

The country eastward had been patrolled as far as Nesle and Ham, both of which had been found unoccupied. On the 19th, French Infantry had been seen at Poix, but they had at once retired to Abbeville. This day (20th) a reconnaissance sent out by General von Mirus, consisting of a squadron of the 7th Lancers, a battalion of the 4th Grenadier Regiment, and a light battery, got engaged with the enemy at Querrieux, and lost 4 men killed and 50 wounded. The presence of a large force was ascertained. At the close of the day the German troops stood: Head-quarters and 16th Division at Amiens, with a battalion and two squadrons on the right bank of the Somme at Rivery and Camons, charged to patrol northwards and along the Albert road; two companies of the 70th Regiment with quarter-squadron Hussars left to protect the Rouen railway at Poix, and an adjacent station; 15th Division on the Luce with the right wing at Rozières-en-Santerre and outposts towards the Somme; 3rd Cavalry Division with its head-quarters at Méharicourt, and right wing at Chaulnes, continued to feel to north and north-east. Orders were given for all foot-sore and such-like enfeebled men to be collected at Amiens, and organized under the command of a Captain from each division; when well enough, to be turned to garrison work.

On the 21st, the enemy's position was pretty well known, also that all but foot crossings over the Somme had been destroyed. The troops were allowed to rest as much as possible, the three divisions occupying the same positions as before; but a battalion from the 15th was moved forward to occupy a passage over the Somme at Lamotte-Brebière, and to relieve some companies of

the 3rd Brigade at Glisy. The last-named body of troops was concentrated in the village of Rivery, and the north-eastern suburbs of St. Maurice and St. Peter, and commenced throwing up some fortifications. The bridge train commenced repairing and constructing bridges at La Neuville, Camons, and Longueau, which were ready on the morning of the 23rd.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

ACTION ON THE HALLUE OR AT QUERRIEUX—RETREAT OF THE FRENCH TO SHELTER OF THE NORTHERN FORTRESSES—GERMAN 8TH ARMY CORPS SHEWS FRONT TO THESE, WHILE DETACHMENTS OF 1ST CORPS AND RESERVES BLOCKADE PERONNE.

ON the 22nd two squadrons of Hussars and the Fusilier Battalion of the 70th Regiment went out to the north-west to look out for Francs-tireurs, but found none. The enemy's position along the Hallue was now pretty well known, and final arrangements were made for the attack, the troops standing that night as follows: Head-quarters and 16th Division at Amiens, with detachments at Dreuil-les-Amiens, Pont de Metz, and Saleux; 15th Division, front along the Somme from Camons to Blangi, with rear at Boves and St. Nicholas; 3rd Cavalry Division and Jäger Battalion at Villers-Bretonneux and villages south and west, two squadrons in Lihons and Chaulnes; 3rd Infantry Brigade as before. Orders were issued to the following effect: the 15th Division to cross the Somme at Camons and La Neuville<sup>1</sup> in time enough for its columns to debouch at 8 a.m. from the former place, and march on the forest lying between Allonville and Querrieux; the Jäger Battalion to remain till 10 a.m. with one quarter-squadron of Hussars to watch Fouilloy, and then to rejoin the division by Lamotte-Brebière, the riding detachment of the Reserve Artillery

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<sup>1</sup> There are two villages of that name, one near Corbie, the other on the Somme, close to Amiens. The latter of course is meant.

to follow close on the 15th Division, after which the cavalry (except the 5th Lancers) by the same crossings, but on freeing itself to make Cardonnettes its point of direction, and to establish communications between the two infantry divisions. The 5th Lancers were told off to the Reserve; one squadron to be at Lamotte-Brebière at 10 a.m., the other three crossing at Camons, to stand on the junction of the roads from Amiens and Rivery to Querrieux at eleven. The two squadrons at or near Chaulnes to remain there, and the 7th Lancers were also detached to watch the approaches from Abbeville, so that only six squadrons could have been left with the division.

The general object of the movements, was notified as taking the enemy to be facing west after driving his advanced posts across the Hallue to merely threaten his front, while an attempt should be made to turn his right, cut off his line of retreat on the northern fortresses, drive him back to Péronne, or on the Somme, now rendered impassible by himself, according as he might appear inclined to yield or hold the position. The particular duty of the 15th Division was keeping if possible one brigade in reserve, with the other to clear the wood of Querrieux, and to secure its right flank against Bussy and Vecquemont, then to menace the left bank of the Hallue, but not to attempt to cross the stream unless receiving special orders to that effect, or unless the enemy should be observed to retire. The 16th Division, followed by the foot detachment of the Reserve Artillery, was directed to debouch from Amiens at 8 a.m. in brigade columns by two bridges, passing either side of the citadel, and to advance along the Poulainville and Raineville roads, sending forward the Hussars to scour the country and bring in news as rapidly as possible. The Reserve, consisting of eight<sup>1</sup> battalions of the 1st Corps, was to march at eleven, following the route of the 15th Division, but detaching three battalions and a battery to Glisy, for

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<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Brigade had been reinforced from Rouen.

the purpose of holding the Somme passage at Lamotte-Brebière. A similar crossing west of Amiens, near Montières, to be prepared by the pontoon train at eleven.

The second supply of ammunition and the rest of the train to remain in quarters, the baggage to be parked—of the cavalry division south of Longueau, of the 15th at Cagny, of the 16th on the western boulevard of Amiens, of the Reserve Artillery at Boves; all to await further orders. The Commander of the corps made known that he would be found with the 15th Division. The Commander-in-Chief was to accompany, I believe, the Reserve. I knew nothing of these arrangements, but keeping a previous promise, at 5 a.m. on the 23rd, Rosen's man roused me and fetched my kit, and at a little before seven, I found the 32nd Brigade forming on the boulevard. I followed some way a squadron of the 9th Hussars along the Montigny road; but presently observing columns on the Raineville and Bertangles roads, I crossed to the former, which was led by General von Barnekow. After passing Raineville some way about noon, the enemy was to be seen on a ridge to the S.E., which appeared to run about N.—S. parallel to the Hallue stream. He had detachments in the villages of Montigny and Beaucourt, which, after the columns had changed direction nearly three-quarters right-about, were quickly carried by the 70th Regiment, with a loss of two Officers and some men: the 40th following as 2nd line in battalion-columns at about deploying intervals. The descent into the valley of the Hallue from our side was gradual, and here and there wooded, but the opposite ascent was steep and uncovered, near the top of the ridge, like a glacis. The battery moving with the brigade tried to find a good position from which to play thereon, but without much success. The naïve remarks of the two divisional Chaplains who rode some way forward, amused me much. I went on as far as the edge of the wood near Montigny, where I found—and introduced myself to—the new Commander of Hohenzollerns, promoted from a rifle battalion, Colonel von Reinike,

then temporarily in command of the brigade.<sup>1</sup> With him I went up into a château, where, later in the afternoon, the left of the 30th Brigade felt the right of the 32nd; the 31st stood with the cavalry in reserve to this, the left flank. There was a pretty good view to be had over this—the west front of the French—but towards Pont Noyelles, where the toughest part of the fight was going on, little was to be made out but smoke. The fire on us from the ridge was very slack, and consisted mostly of chassepôt bullets. While I was at the château, which was presently employed as a hospital, part of the 40th was brought into 1st line, companies being distributed at different points in and north of Beaucourt, and before dark had to beat off attacks of French Infantry coming from the woods on the left-front.

It appears that the attack by the 15th Division, instead of being confined to dislodging so much of the enemy as might be on the right bank of the Hallue, and merely menacing the dominant position, was at once directed across the stream; while General von Barnekow, instead of being allowed to prosecute his turning movement far enough north to bring his troops opposite the point where the commanding ridge occupied by the French descends near the village of Contay, was ordered to front the position where it was as difficult, I suppose, to bombard or storm the height as it was further south. He found that it would not be advisable to attempt an attack thereon when the day was so far advanced, and gave his attention to securing his troops for the night. I believe a very large proportion of the 32nd Brigade was on outpost duty, and passed the desperately cold night in the open.

At dark I followed into a peasant's house the Brigade and Regimental Staffs, where reports were received and orders issued. There was nothing to eat, but the poor old woman kept up a fire for us all night; her husband was taken to show somebody somewhere, and

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel (now Major-General) von Rex was absent, sick, and did not rejoin till the armistice.

was too frightened to return, so the poor creature sat up in great anxiety. Myself collected four chairs as a bed, but as each orderly who came in to see the Brigade Adjutant—lying on straw beside me—took one chair from under me, my rest was somewhat broken, and about midnight I had only one left.

Towards eight in the morning, musketry fire seemed to begin in the direction of the advance of the 15th Division and other troops, but appeared slight. The enemy still held the ridge in perhaps somewhat stronger force than the day before, and had extended his right further north. Also, from that flank which rested on the village of Contay, he had wheeled up troops to face at right angles to the line on the ridge, and was sending forward skirmishers against our left, when the sight of the battalions massed in rear of our centre, and of the cavalry brigade moving towards his outermost flank, made him give up this apparent attempt to force the 16th Division back.

Before or about the time I turned out, Rosen with half of his own and a company of the 2nd Battalion, had moved out to the left and operated for some time against that demonstration. About noon the enemy opened fire from a heavy battery placed near the point where the ridge begins to fall northwards, but with so little effect, that if I recollect aright, it was not returned by the Reserve. I did not know at all what the 15th Division and the troops of the 1st Corps were doing, but imagined they must be working from Corbie northwards,<sup>1</sup> and that the 16th Division, with the cavalry, was waiting to convert into a rout the enemy's retreat, as soon as that could be seen commencing.

The facts are, I believe, that on the 23rd the heads of columns of the 15th Division having been delayed about an hour by the sinking of the pontoon bridge at La Neuville, approached the Hallue about eleven, and found the village of Querrieux unoccupied. A wood, which begins there and extends along the height,

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<sup>1</sup> I thought on the previous day that the troops, whose left touched us at the château, were of the 31st and not of the 30th Brigade.

however, as also the villages of Pont Noyelles, Bussy, and Daours, were strongly held, and several batteries drove up to the ridge which has so great a command over the ground westward. The divisional and riding batteries (42 or 48 guns) established themselves opposite, while the battalions of the 29th Brigade advanced to the attack. At the commencement the enemy appeared to be in the strength of a division, but shortly afterwards to receive reinforcements from the direction of Corbie. Pont Noyelles was taken, and thence six companies of the 33rd Fusiliers ascended the height and captured two guns. Before they had time, however, to spike more than one of them, the brisk counter-attack of five battalions drove them back to Pont Noyelles, into which the French succeeded in entering for a time, one of the Prussian battalions having fired away all its ammunition. Bussy was likewise taken and held. Daours was stoutly defended by line, sailors, and Mobile Guards, part behind intrenchments, for some hours, till the arrival of the Jäger Battalion turned the tide in favour of the Germans, while two battalions and a battery from the Reserve at Lamotte, came up to give further support.

When the state of affairs became apparent, namely, that the enemy was much stronger, both as to numbers and position, than had been expected, the 30th Brigade was ordered into action, sending two battalions to Querrieux and 3½ to Fréchencourt, whence to communicate with the 16th Division, and to attempt to carry, from that side, a part of the eminence compared to a bastion, which seemed impregnable from the south. General von Strubberg reached his point not much too soon, for he had presently to beat off an attack of the French coming down from the height in mass, and after that he could easily see that the position was from that side as difficult of assault as from the other. The division, therefore, had to content itself with holding the points already won, and it cost something to do even that much. Twice did masses of the collective strength of two divisions come down on the line Querrieux-Daours, hard fighting being required to repulse them. The combat in the

latter village did not cease till dark, and then while 70 of the defenders were lying dead, the remainder were nearly all taken prisoners. A third battalion from the Reserve was brought into action to aid in repelling the last advance of the enemy between Querrieux and Bussy, and lost its Commander by one of the first shots. On this flank, as well as on the left, the captured villages were occupied during the night and the next day without any further enterprise. Council was being taken as to other manœuvres for Christmas day, after the transport to the rear of the wounded should set the troops free to abandon the scene of previous fighting, when towards evening the enemy was discovered to be in retreat.

General Faidherbe's account agrees pretty closely with these details, but I had no idea when at Beaucourt on the night of the 23rd, that a French division was established so close to us as in Bavelincourt. There is a beautiful simplicity in the lectures, which it appears were delivered to the young soldiers, demonstrating that one of the proofs of victory consists in sleeping on the battle-field. The proposition was accepted, however, for one night only. Perhaps some syllogist amongst the Mobile Guards, when breaking his teeth over the frozen bread next morning, pointed out that much more must the Prussians be victorious, for they had slept in captured villages. Still the General has a right to plume himself on having stolen away so quietly and unmolestedly, though he need not have said that it was on cantonments in rear, for the retreat was in fact on the northern quadrilateral. He gives his losses as 141 killed and 905 wounded, the former including 5 and the latter 45 Officers; also 138 horses, besides a few hundred prisoners and a thousand or so missing, but most of the latter, it would seem, rejoined when the absurdity of the sleeping on the battle-field theorem had been demonstrated.

The Prussians lost 4 Officers, 80 men, and 20 horses killed; 33 Officers, 698 men, and 37 horses wounded; also 91 men missing on the 23rd; and on the morning of the 24th, 1 Officer and 26 men

wounded, and one missing. As unwounded prisoners, remained in their hands:—1 Lieutenant-Colonel, 1 Naval Captain, 17 other Officers, and 950 men; also an Officer and 150 men were taken in the subsequent pursuit. Of the various regiments, I believe the 33rd Fusiliers suffered most severely. My own particular friends of the 40th lost on the two days 5 men killed, 21 wounded, and 10 missing; and the Artillery Detachment, 2 men wounded and 8 horses disabled. They fired only 312 rounds.

I spent the earlier part of the 24th passing backwards and forwards along the front of the brigade, watching what French movements took place. They had bodies of hardly battalion strength posted about on the ridge with some few tirailleurs thrown out. Near where they for some little time worked the heavy battery, were masses of greater strength, as to whose nationality I had some argument with a 40th Officer, who for a long time would have it they were Prussians. With my glass I could make out that they were suffering from the cold even worse than we did, by the way their men stamped their feet and moved about. Soon after noon I was pretty sure I could see bayonets and heads moving northwards, in rear of the last-named mass. Also a General and Staff appeared riding along the ridge, as if giving last orders to the troops facing west, but I did not perceive any corresponding movement on the part of the 16th Division or of the Cavalry. I presently got tired of watching and turned into the head-quarter house to get warmed. Soon after three the enemy was reported to be in retreat; then the statement was contradicted; about dark it was re-asserted, and a patrol of the 70th was sent forward, which ascended the ridge and found the position entirely abandoned. The brigade was then ordered into quarters, the 40th at Raineville and the 70th at Bertangles. We reached our billets by 11 p.m., where a good supper and comfortable bed did not make me much envy the Adjutant of the 1st Battalion, who had to go back to Amiens to fetch orders. This sort of duty pressed hard sometimes on Staff Officers, when in addition



to their normal work, perhaps after a long march or fight, they had to ride or drive some 10 or 15 miles to the head-quarters of the division or Army Corps, wait about for hours till orders were issued, bring them to the division, brigade, or regiment, and finally issue them to the companies of their own battalion.

I do not think that my night's rest was disturbed by the feelings of dissatisfaction with the two days' work, which I have experienced since learning what had in the first instance been the plan of operations, and what the change of purpose resulted in. It was certainly a bold idea to attempt the surrounding of a force of 40,000 men in their own country by at the outside 30,000 strangers<sup>1</sup>, but while detaching half or more of the force so far from its base as to attack the French at the point where the rampart-like ridge falls to the general level, the possession by the Prussians of 10 squadrons of cavalry,<sup>2</sup> with which arm the other side was almost unprovided, was to be counted on as likely to deter the enemy from venturing into the comparatively open country across which the 16th Division at first marched. Then the effect on young and hardly disciplined troops, who had for days been preparing to receive their enemy from one side, of bringing fire to bear on them from the exactly opposite quarter, must have been telling. Above all, the plan for turning to account the destruction by the French themselves of the Somme passages has so tickled my fancy, that I cannot forgive General von Manteuffel for not having prosecuted it.

On the 25th we had an early rouse but a long wait for orders. About noon we marched, and halting at Beaucourt, (to allow the 31st Brigade to pass to the front) found the old woman in great joy at

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<sup>1</sup> I cannot make the 8th Army Corps, with the cavalry and eight battalions of the 1st Corps, come to more combatants.

<sup>2</sup> Brigade of six squadrons, — Hussars and Lancers attached to Infantry Divisions and Reserve = 10 squadrons probably, as detachments were left here and there.

having recovered her husband. After dark we reached Millencourt (a little west of Albert) where we were billeted on two queer old damsels, one of whom kept saying "Ah! I am not afraid of you. I remember you in 1815." I don't think she looked quite so pleasant when a hint was given that one chicken was hardly enough for our Christmas supper. Next day the brigade continued the march northwards and was "dislocated" in villages west of Bapaume, Achiet-le-petit falling to the 1-40th with a battery and, I think, some train.

The movements of other troops had been on this wise:—The two brigades of the 15th Division were already on the march to re-cross the Somme on the morning of the 25th, when the order was received to push forwards on Albert. The 29th Brigade with divisional head-quarters came that day no further than to La Houssoye, Querrieux, and neighbourhood, but the 30th with head-quarters of the Army Corps advanced to Albert. The 3rd Cavalry Division reinforced by a Brigade of the Guard under Prince Albrecht the younger, detached and just arrived from the 4th Army, came to Baizieux and Warloy, but the Brigade of Count Dohna, which had accompanied the 16th Division since the morning of the 23rd, advanced with the head of the latter to the line: Senlis, Bouzincourt, Avelny. The Fusilier Battalion of the 70th Regiment was placed under the orders of Colonel von Pestel to support the 7th Lancers in clearing the country westward of Francs-tireurs. On the 26th, head-quarters of the Corps with the 30th Brigade marched to Bapaume, which in the morning had been found unoccupied; the 29th was distributed between that place and Albert, detaching a battalion of the 33rd Fusiliers in support of the Prince's Brigade, which, leaving the 3rd Cavalry Division, took ground to the right as far as Sailly. Count von der Groeben's head-quarters came to Le Transloy, while the Brigade Dohna continued with the 16th Division, the head-quarters of which with the 31st Brigade were established at Bucquoy. Communications were maintained between Bapaume and Amiens by a half squadron at Albert, and relays

furnished between the right flank at Sailly and the troops of the 1st Corps on the left bank of the Somme by the Guard Cavalry *via* Bray. Patrols were of course numerous; those from the left front pushing forward towards Beaumetz, Arras, and Croisilles; from the right, efforts being directed to break up communications between Péronne and Cambrai. What accounts were received went to cause the belief that the main body of the French had retired to Douay, leaving only small detachments at Arras and Cambrai. The supply of ammunition was replenished from Soissons *via* Breteuil and that of provisions from Amiens. On that day a report was received from Colonel von Pestel (at Hangest on the Somme below Amiens) that from Abbeville, believed to be garrisoned by 3,000 Mobile Guards, Pont Remy had been occupied, and outposts pushed forward to Sorel and Long-pré. To the Colonel were sent instructions to use his force as a flying column to cover Amiens from Abbeville on either bank of the Somme, to intercept the communications of the latter place with Arras and Hesdin, with liberty, if he found it feasible, to destroy railway and telegraph on the Boulogne side. On the 28th he had a brilliant success near Long-pré against three battalions of Mobile Guards, taking prisoners 10 Officers and 230 men, besides capturing three colours.

On the 27th, I believe the bombardment of Péronne commenced by the brigade of the 1st Corps and the detachment of General von Senden<sup>1</sup>. About 3 p.m. some 20 or 30 shots were heard at Bapaume, (as also by us at Achiet-le-petit) coming apparently from the direction of the fortress. Of the 8th Corps, the head-quarters of the 15th Division came to Bapaume, the 29th Brigade was cantoned at Sailly, le Transloy, and Rocquigny, and two riding batteries of the Reserve

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<sup>1</sup> This detachment consisted of the 19th and 81st Regiments belonging in peace time to the garrison of Mainz, and of the 1st Reserve Dragoons and 3rd Reserve Hussars. It had been formed on the capitulation of Metz out of the above troops of the 3rd Reserve Division, the Landwehr battalions of which were sent back to Germany with prisoners. It was ordered westwards from Mézières when news was received of Faidherbe's advance.

Artillery close in rear of Bapaume. One had already been attached to the Brigade of Cavalry of the Guard. The remainder of the troops remained stationary, except that besides the before-mentioned patrols, detachments of infantry without packs, and leaving worn-out and weak men in quarters, kept moving about, disarming the inhabitants and destroying communications. A stronger detachment under Colonel Wittich of the 9th Hussars, consisting of two squadrons, a battalion of the 69th and two guns, advanced to Avesnes-le-Comte.

The object of the Corps thus standing in front of the northern fortresses<sup>1</sup> will be clearly seen to be that of covering the siege of Péronne, as a part of the general duty of protecting the army investing Paris from attacks on its rear. The need to get rid of this outpost of the enemy was pressing, for it hampered much the movements of the 1st Army necessary to keep off attempts to break through its line from the North and from Hâvre.

On the 29th, the 31st Brigade was ordered back by Combles to relieve before Péronne the 3rd Brigade wanted by the 1st Corps in Normandy, and the task of reducing Péronne was entrusted to General von Barnekow. Count von der Groeben, now commanding on the left, was warned to be on the look out for a diversion in favour of the little fortress, and the flying column at Avesnes-le-Comte was directed to patrol southwards along the flank in search of Francs-tireurs, who had shewn in rear. Next day, as this detachment scoured the country north of Arras, Colonel Wittich succeeded in capturing near Soucher, five Officers and 170 men.

On the 31st it was understood that siege guns had arrived at Péronne.

About this time also the right flank was covered

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<sup>1</sup> While writing, I do not know or cannot remember if there is any previous instance in history of a French Army operating southward from these fortresses or any of them as a base. Or if during their construction, or that of any one of them, or while the question of the retention by the French of one or all of them may have been discussed, they were ever looked on otherwise than as a bulwark against Flanders.

by a division of Saxon Cavalry and a Jäger Battalion under Count Lippe occupying St. Quentin and neighbourhood.

Head-quarters of the Army Corps retired to a more central position at Combles. Notwithstanding the opposition of a French Battalion from Cambrai, a detachment of the 30th Brigade succeeded this day in blowing up the bridges at Marcoing and Masnières.

The French North Army had taken up a beautiful position in villages along the Scarpe, secured on either flank by Arras and Douai, with a division in second line between Oppy and Esquerchin. General Faidherbe says that the prisoners, who were pounced on in his rear, had no cartridges.

Our luck on the 26th had taken us into a comfortable farm-house in possession of a widow, who entertained us very well for the six days we halted there.

The Regimental Band, too, was at Rosen's disposition, the Adjutant Steinöcker's birthday fell during that time, and New Year's Eve was fêted by Rosen's giving a dinner to his 14 Officers, with a Christmas tree set up in a corner of the room.

It was as well that we had our feasting out on the New Year's Eve instead of waiting for the day itself. Early in the morning came an order for the battalion to march on Bucquoy and relieve one of the 70th. On arrival we found Count Dohna and Colonel von Herzberg, temporarily sent down from the staff to command the 32nd Brigade. Both seemed in some anxiety about something, and the latter gave orders to Rosen to push forward to Hannescamps with two companies, in order to support a detachment believed to be engaged, and eventually to retire on Puisieux au Mont. Stepping well out we soon reached Hannescamps, where, however, there was nothing to be seen but our own vedettes. Rosen and Steinöcker rode forward to seek some one with whom to fight, but found only General von Mirus of the other cavalry brigade on the road between La Cauchie and Bailleulmont, who told the Major there was no enemy nearer than the line Barly-Warlus, and that a cavalry

patrol had been fired on. During the hour or two, which the two companies spent in cold and hunger, arrived from the left a Lancer Detachment, the Subaltern in command of which was anxious to know where he was to fight; then the Colonel of the 5th Lancers with a larger detachment, and also came a company of the 3-40th. There seemed to be some uncertainty as to the whereabouts on the left of a battalion of the 70th. Soon after Rosen's return he received a message to take his two companies back to Bucquoy, which village seemed to be empty of troops, while nothing was doing but quarters being prepared for the head-quarters of the cavalry division, and orderlies coming from and going to all points of the compass. About dusk General von der Groeben rides in from Puisieux, then the Colonel of the 40th from the right with the other half of the 1st Battalion and part of the 3rd. We have to trudge forward again with the two companies to Hannescamps in the dark, and there rouse out the company of the 3rd Battalion, which has just made itself comfortable, and send it back to Bucquoy. The 5th Lancers had of course had the pick of the billets, but we found comfortable enough quarters with the curé, who, poor gentleman, had to ask Rosen for bread to eke out the supper of rabbit he shared with us. There being a harmonium in the room, a Non-Commissioned Officer of the colour-escort, who was a pianoforte maker by trade, and who had before the war lived in Paris, came in and played to us till we turned in.

Before daylight next morning we turned out, much pitied by the curate, who kept holding up his hands and saying, "What a life to lead!" and marched through the Achiets great and small, the column eventually consisting of a squadron of the 9th Hussars, two batteries of artillery, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the Hohenzollerns, then through Bapaume and Rocquigny to Manancourt, which we reached at 3.30 p.m. Passing Bapaume, Rosen was told by a General of the 15th Division that a French line regiment had shewn on the Sapignies road, but I don't think we paid much heed to the news; nor as we passed through

Rocquigny, did the 33rd lying there seem to know how soon they would be called into action. Their Colonel, von Henning, came out with wine to greet his old comrades of the 40th. Soon after leaving him though, we heard firing north-west, and subsequently news overtook us that Bapaume had been attacked, and that the 33rd had been summoned as reinforcement. It may be remembered that those days immediately preceding and following New-Year's day were bitterly cold, therefore, though the actual marching kept one in good case, it was by no means comfortable waiting about at the end of a long trudge, till quarters had been assigned, outposts fixed on, and guards told off. Most of the Officers had invested in hoods, which they drew over their helmets; all stirrup-irons were of course wrapped in straw, and many of the Hussars had wollen stockings over their boots. Our billets were in the château of the Duc de Rohan, where also were quartered the regimental and brigade headquarters.

The reason for our long march was that it had been considered necessary to place more infantry between Cambrai and Péronne than the single battalion hitherto supporting the cavalry of the Guard, and also to add another link to the chain extending eastward. It may be thought that this purpose would have been more readily served by detaching on the duty the nearest regiment, than by bringing another across from almost the extreme left flank. But there must be remembered the disadvantages of breaking up for any time the permanent organization of bodies of troops. Not only is much extra work entailed on all staff, but neither Commanders nor commanded have the same feeling of knowing and getting on well with each other, which conduces so much to the maintenance of discipline and to success in the field. Now, the 16th Division had been already broken up by brigades, and the 32nd Brigade by battalions, and could not then be re-united, whereas the 15th had detached only one battalion, and could therefore be easily preserved intact. Still, I think, if the enemy's intentions had been so fully discovered as they were next day, we should have

been saved the trouble of retiring so far beyond Bapaume, and of rushing back into line with it on the following morning. The order of the 1st, under which the re-arrangement took place, had directed the detached battalion of the 33rd to be called into the 29th Brigade, the 15th Division to occupy with its left wing Achiet le Grand and its railway station; the Cavalry Division to dispatch two battalions of the 40th, with two batteries of the 16th Division, and a squadron of the 9th Hussars, to Etricourt, Manancourt, and Morlu, in that region coming under command of the Prince; to send the remaining battalion and squadrons on the 2nd as far as Heudicourt and Epéhy, and on the 3rd to Le Catelet; lastly, to call in the battalion of the 69th, and concentrate its squadrons at Bucquoy and Achiet-le-petit, without at all relaxing the duty of patrolling north and west of Arras, as well as keeping up communication with Colonel von Pestel's detachment. The Prince's detachment, thus reinforced, was, besides destroying the enemy's communications in the north-east, to preserve those of the Army Corps with St. Quentin in the south-east.



## CHAPTER XV.

### BATTLE OF BAPAUME—FAIDHERBE CONSIDERED AS A WRITER AS WELL AS A WARRIOR.

It seems that the French regiments we heard of, when passing through Bapaume, turned out to be the advanced guard of about two divisions advancing against the Prussian line. They were brought to a stand at Sapignies by the 30th Brigade, and the troops on this side occupied for the night, positions as follows: 29th Brigade, Frémicourt to Bapaume; 30th, on the line Achiet-le-grand to Sapignies; 3rd Cavalry Division, south of Miraumont. The 1st supply of reserve ammunition was so far south as Estrées Dénicourt on the Roman road from Villers Carbonnel to Amiens. Orders were issued that night from Corps head-quarters at Combles, directing General von Kummer to defend Bapaume, General von der Groeben and Prince Albrecht to support him on the flanks. Also to General von Barnekow for 3 battalions and 4 batteries, to be despatched as a reserve.

We in the castle had understood that the French had been effectively repulsed from Bapaume, and had hoped on turning in for a comfortable halt next day. The luxurious chambers were peculiarly suited for a rest, so that I must say that it was with some disgust that I learnt from Steinöcker before daylight, that the battalion was wanted again northwards. The bath I had promised myself was frozen; I was very stiff and footsore.

The detachment formed north of Etrécourt, where the 3rd Battalion had lain, while the 2nd, which had, according to the before quoted orders, formed a column

with three squadrons under Colonel Wittich, of the 9th Hussars, moved by a parallel road further east, still not so far but that when the country was open it could be seen from time to time. At Bertincourt, a regiment of Lancers of the Guard with a horse battery overtook us, and took the road to Morchies at a hard trot. All these troops were under the immediate command of the young Prince.

About this time artillery, platoon, and file firing was to be heard apparently to the north of Bapaume, and consulting a capital departmental map I had bought from our hostess at Achiet-le-petit, I made sure that the French were in retreat, and that the object of our movements was to get as soon as possible across the Cambrai road and cut them off from that fortress. Therefore as our column changed direction to the left and marched through Hablincourt to Bancourt, I could not but think we were losing time by inclining so much to the west. I had started with the advanced guard of the infantry, but soon pushed on to catch up the cavalry and staff, not very easy to do on foot. I met numbers of villagers running away from the line of advance of their own deliverers, and carrying furniture and sundries with them. So great was my confidence that as a matter of course the French would be driven back, that I kept urging all I met to stay at home, and assuring them that the battle would not come near their villages, and some did really follow my advice. One or two Officers of General von Goeben's staff passed me, but I had no opportunity of asking what was going on.

As the advanced guard of Hussars reached Bancourt, the firing seemed more distant, and at last to die away. This made me assume that the enemy must have withdrawn towards Arras again, and think there could be little for our detachment to do. However, as infantry came up, it formed in battalion "attack columns" north of the village, and after a little breathing time, the two battalions advanced with about deploying interval across the Imperial road, and then changed direction quarter-left towards the village of Favreuil. The Prince and the Brigadier were directing

the movements. A company of the 3rd Battalion had been detached to the right to feel towards Colonel Wittich's column, but had returned. It should be mentioned that the point where we crossed the Imperial road being 126 mètres above the level of the sea, gives a good view and command over the ground, from the north-east front of Bapaume along the Arras road, till masked by Favreuil, whence round by Beugnâtre to a rising of 128 mètres, which closes the view to the north-east. A radius of nearly 3,000 mètres, in fact, encloses the ground to be seen, which gently undulates to the front and right-front, but is a good deal broken by ravines to the left front. As the two battalions advanced, nothing was at first to be seen, but presently a column appeared marching along the Arras road towards Bapaume, halted, fronted, and threw out skirmishers towards Favreuil and our left. Neither Colonel Reinike, with whom I was riding (the Adjutant of the 3rd Battalion having kindly lent me his second horse), nor myself could believe that they were French, until their bullets began to whistle about us. Then two company columns of Rosen's Battalion were ordered into the village, which seemed to me as yet unoccupied, while the remaining half, as also the 3rd battalion, was distributed in company columns, with skirmishers on either flank of and between that village and the next one to the east, Beugnâtre. The two batteries drove forward also, I believe to the left of this small body of infantry, but soon found the ground untenable. I did not see them there, for, hoping to get a good view of what French might be on the Arras road, from the north-west of the village, I followed the two companies into Favreuil, which consisted of very irregular thoroughfares, besides a number of garden enclosures, through which the skirmishers were pushing without any visible resistance, though now and then a bullet came, I could not make out from where. At last, when crossing a road alone, I got a volley from a small body of men about a hundred yards off to my right, but an irregularity in a building at the further side gave me shelter. Being uncertain whether these were not Prussians who knew me not, I told the few 40th men

who came up sharp, not to fire at them till I had another peep. My craning round long enough only to see that the unknown wore képis, brought another volley, harmless, but that it made my unruly mount so fidgety that the saddle twisted round, and I came to the ground. Telling the 40th men that they might deal with these bad shots as they pleased, I crossed their fire again and retired to better shelter, where I could draw the girths tight enough. Rosen was about trying to get his clearing of the village into a more orderly fashion, but it seemed very difficult work. Amongst his Officers, pushing well forward, I noticed particularly a son of old Barnekow's, a handsome, smooth-faced lad, who presently got hit on the head, but not so badly as to lay him up. Finding that I could see very little and do little good with the unruly beast, I rode back out of the village, on the edge of which, by the way, stood the battalion colour unprotected, but by the usual Non-Commissioned Officer escort, then perceiving a corn stack a short way up a slope to the south-east I galloped thither under a fire which made my nag shake his head, and which I have reason to believe, came from both belligerents, for I was afterwards told that some men of a company of the 68th Regiment belonging to the 15th Division, which had been left in or near Favreuil, before the arrival of the 40th Regiment, not liking my appearance and the big map I carried, had let fly at me. Sheltered by the stack from a heavy chassépôt fire coming from the ravines this side of the Arras road, were the Colonel of the regiment and the Major of the 3rd Battalion. A retreat was soon ordered towards Beugnâtre, but detachments were left some time in hollow ways which crossed each other between the two villages. Rosen's half battalion still held to Favreuil,<sup>1</sup> though his support retired with the other companies. I felt somewhat ashamed of having left him, but then I wanted a

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<sup>1</sup> There was some blunder in giving or passing the orders, about which I have not asked too many questions. All I know is, that my friend Rosen was apt at times to have an ear as bad as Nelson's eye, when signals for retreat were being made.

better view of the general conduct of affairs than I could get inside.

The arrangements for assisting the wounded struck me on this day as being the worst I had seen during the campaign. I could not make out that there was any extra regimental aid whatever. One wounded man I managed, with help, to get on my horse, which at once ran away with him; another I assisted in carrying some way, during which I got a spent ball on my back, but was no more hurt than by the one on the Spicheren height. After concentrating near Beugnâtre, the 3rd and half the 1st Battalion marched by somewhat of a sweep round to avoid the shelling of the artillery, now established on or beyond the Arras road, back to the Cambrai road, on which they formed line with a company extended a short way in front. It should be noted that the rifle fire from the hollows continued until the last detachment was withdrawn from the cross road—a man was badly hit in the breast just as we moved off—but then seemed to give place to that of shells. Thinking to keep under the higher parts of their trajectories, and wishing to trudge as little over ploughed land as possible, I followed the cord of the arc the 40th men were making, but got covered with mud by one of these projectiles, which, however, kindly ricocheted onwards without bursting.

The two batteries which had formed part of the column, had now been reinforced by the horse one, which had started in the morning with the cavalry, and the latter with one of the former were carrying on the usual duel half left from the Imperial road. There was a thick haze in the direction of the Arras road, so that the enemy's batteries were only distinguishable by the flashes of the guns. Captains were very dissatisfied with their own performances. Shells did not come in very accurately, but a splinter once knocked over two men at one gun, who soon were up again, the gunner who was hit picking up the splinter and putting it in his coat breast. All this time Bapaume seemed to be keeping quiet, and I could not conceive what the 15th Division was about. Before evening, however, some skirmishers appeared, circling

the north-east of that town, and then opening fire. I rather think they were part of the 68th Regiment, or of the 2-40th. The latter battalion, marching with the right flank column, had taken ground to the left, and halted in rear of Bancourt about 1 p.m. There it at once received orders to work on the enemy's left flank at St. Aubin and Favreuil. While two companies occupied some buildings on the high road, the other two advanced against the former little village, which lies down to the north-west of Bapaume. They found it occupied by the enemy, and themselves reinforced a company of the 68th, which, unable to get into the village, was keeping up a fire against it from the cover of a circular pit which flanked the buildings and a churchyard further on, which were held by the French. The three then surrounded the village, and having some obstinate street fighting after it had been charged, got possession of it, and about 200 prisoners, by 3.30 p.m. The supports were then sent into St. Aubin, and orders given to the battalion to hold the place in communication with one of the 68th, sheltered by a gravel pit and brick kiln hard by.

I have no close details of the action in the centre and on the left flank, but a general account informs me that towards 9 a.m. the French developed their force and commenced their attack. The villages of Favreuil and Briefvillers were quickly taken, and although the latter was recaptured by the 33rd Regiment, it could not be held. Then the enemy seemed to be directing the bulk of his forces against the left. About noon, General von Kummer concentrated his division at Bapaume, giving up the ground in front. This must have been just before the Prince's detachment arrived, and we observed the French column advance along the Arras road. All the afternoon was employed by the enemy in attempts to envelop the Prussian left, and he must have advanced in echelon far enough south to show a front to east, for the group of villages south by west of Bapaume, Tilloy and Ligny, are described as having been maintained after obstinate fighting and hard struggling.

A French account, published in the *Ordre d' Arras*,

describes the engagement as commencing on the plains of Ervillers, a division as established first between Bihucourt and Sapignies, then reinforced by a second, which, as I understand it, passed by the right of the former, and having advanced in échelon, changed front to its left. Biefvillers and Grévillers were successively occupied, the former being by the writer looked on as the key of the French position, and described as repulsing one or more attacks of the Prussians. These divisions seem to have constituted the 22nd Corps, and while it gradually gained ground southwards, as a turning movement, the 23rd must have advanced, somewhat later, to a front attack, though I cannot altogether reconcile the description of its movements with what I could personally observe at and near Favreuil and Beugnâtre. The latest formed division of Mobile Guards, commanded by General Robin, belonged to the latter corps, and is stated by more than one account to have been of little use. General Faidherbe describes a more useful division of the corps, as after occupying Behagnies and Sapignies, falling upon Favreuil—strongly occupied by three companies—and bombarding it livelily from both sides.

To return to what I could see myself. After staying with the batteries for some little time, I was moving towards the infantry, when to my delight I saw marching towards us by a circuit from Beugnâtre, a small column, which presently turned out to be Rosen's half battalion with the company of the 68th. There had been great fears of his being cut off, and I certainly did not like the way in which his supports were withdrawn. Notwithstanding that his detachment suffered considerable loss—amongst which 1 Officer killed and 2 or 3 wounded—he would have held on if he could have seen that his doing so would serve any purpose. When he did retire, he found Beugnâtre unoccupied, and effected his march across unmolested.

Soon after these two villages had been evacuated, a line of French skirmishers appeared advancing over the space between them. "Now we shall have some fun if they will only come on!" for Rosen, more than once,

had told me that I ought to see the Prussian troops on the defensive, and certainly that road offered a fine position on which to receive an attack, besides which 12 squadrons of Cavalry were ready to ride them down, if they would only come away from the villages. However, the movement turned out only a prelude to establishing there a battery,<sup>1</sup> whose dropping a few shells amongst us was again only a performance to cover the flank march of a large body of French, parallel to the Cambrai road. These guns were, after a while, moved east of Beugnâtre and played on the Cavalry of the Guard which remained in a hollow to our right front inactive, barring the sending out a patrol now and then. A windmill (distant by the map 3,500 mètres) near the last position of those guns, served me as a landmark, past which I could for a good hour or more before dark, with others, watch the French defile before us in an unmolested manner that I did not like. I longed to see the horse battery and the cavalry used, hurl them back to the northward. The Brigadier did at last send for a battery and have it placed facing the French line of retreat, but it was too late to be of any good further than to take post to receive an attack, if the French changed their minds and came back again. Soon after dark a line of posts was placed parallel to the Imperial road as far as Frémicourt, where the 1-40th turned in for the night with a detachment of the 9th Hussars. The 3rd Battalion was established, I think, at Bancourt with picquets in front; the 2nd held St. Aubin, furnishing similar picquets. The chain was prolonged by the 15th Division round Bapaume and the before-named villages in its left rear. I am not quite sure whether the Cavalry of the Guard remained the night at Beugny

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<sup>1</sup> In a report, or order, to his division dated 4th January, and published in the *Echo du Nord*, General Robin states that towards three o'clock he was able to take position at Beugnâtre, taken from the enemy, and fire on him livelily (*le canonner vivement*) during his retreat. The statement is untrue; the facts according to my own observation being as related in the text, though I do not know for certain whether the battery or the troops seen defiling in its rear belonged to that General's division or not.



or further to the right rear. While waiting outside the village till the arrangements for the night were completed, one of the Officers imagined he could make out, in the direction north of us, a body of men. A patrol was therefore sent to the front, which on return reported that it had proceeded as far as Beugnâtre and found that village unoccupied. Patrols sent out from St. Aubin by the 2nd Battalion also reported that the enemy was bivouacking in his position of the former evening. The same thing was believed to be the case in front of the Prussian left. General Faidherbe says that his troops passed the night in the conquered villages, but nothing about the flank march eastward, I have described witnessing. I can find no account of any of the French engaged on this occasion having immediately afterwards entered Cambrai, so I suppose my conjecture that a retreat was being made on that fortress was wrong, and possibly it was only the useless division seeking more comfortable quarters.

The losses of the Germans in the two days' fighting has been given me as about 50 Officers, 1,000 men, and 150 horses. Of these the 40th had 1 Officer 11 men killed, 5 Officers and 35 men wounded, and 24 men missing. The 2 batteries of the 16th Division had 3 men wounded and 15 horses hit. The number of un-wounded prisoners taken on the 2nd was 5 Officers and 250 men, and on the 3rd, 3 Officers and 300 men. The French losses are given at 183 killed, of whom 9 Officers, 1136 wounded, of whom 41 Officers, 800 missing, of whom 3 Officers. The total Prussian strength available on the 3rd, consisting of 15 battalions, 28 squadrons, and 11 batteries—the troops ordered up from Péronne did not come into or near the action, I believe—I cannot bring, at the outside, to more than 17000 men; and I am inclined to think from the number of foot-sore men now and then sent back to Amiens, that it was not so great. With regard to that of the French, General Faidherbe gives no satisfactory reason why on his side a number hardly equal to 20,000 men took an effective share in the battle.

Issuing orders that night for the Army Corps to take up position on the Somme next day, General von Goeben informed his troops that the division von Kummer, supported by the detachment Prince Albrecht, had maintained the position at Bapaume in a brilliant manner against an enemy four times as strong—two Army Corps. The second para. of the order of the day to the Army of the North reads:—"At the battle of Bapaume, you have taken all the positions; the enemy this time will not contest the victory." Having a strong personal feeling on the subject, I feel disqualified from giving a judgment on the contested point. All I can say, if looked on as an advocate on the Prussian side, is that as night gradually obscured the view, not a doubt entered my mind—knowing then little or nothing of what had taken place on the left—that the French in front of us were in full retreat, and that my strongest feeling—not being aware, as I have since been made, that the fact of his expected supply of ammunition having been diverted to the bombardment of Péronne imposed on the Prussian Corps Commander the necessity for unusual caution—was one of disgust, first of all at the villages of Favreuil and Beugnâtre having been abandoned; lastly, that the flank retreat was not converted into a rout by the artillery and cavalry of the Guard. Anyone who wishes to form a judgment may compare my account with the pamphlet quoted<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In case, as suggested, any of my readers may consult the above brochure, I must notice the author's statement at the foot of page 47. General von Goeben has publicly answered the libel, pointing out that the alleged order was issued by one of General Faidherbe's subordinates to his own division, and that a confusion of names and numbers led to its being attributed to him. The French Commander has in a letter to the *Siecle* of the 13th September, which I had the luck to light on when passing through Strasburg, retracted the statement, but failed to account for what, to use the mildest term applicable, must be called the disingenuousness on his part, which led to the reproduction of an anonymous, on the face of it improbable, piece of news, when, if he did his duty as a Commander, or read the newspapers about him as well as those abroad, he cannot but have been aware of the following paragraph of General Robin's order, to which I have already alluded: "Malheureusement les nouveaux régiments ont trop faibli; "le mouvement de recul s'est changé en fuite pour les lâches et

and will allow what weight he chooses to the reasons alleged by the French Commander for not bombarding Bapaume and for withdrawing his troops from the villages in its neighbourhood. His attention is, however, called to the undisputed fact that the French were the first to commence a retreat, and in the execution of it, were to some extent pursued, while the retirement of the Prussians in expectation of a fresh attack was unmolested, and Bapaume itself used as an outpost by them soon after. The immediate object for which either force was in the field, should also not be lost sight of.

Our village was deserted and there was much appearance of wanton damage having been done. A long search was necessary before getting anything to eat, and the supper consisted of only bread, butter, and wine; after which five of us turned in together upon straw; those who slept talking in various tongues for the benefit of those who waked.

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“quelques gens de coeur se sont laissés entrainer dans une débandade inouë. Justice va être faite et je ne veux pas laisser des-  
 “honorer les Mobilisés du Nord pour ceux qui ont eu peur. Les  
 “chefs de corps vont m’envoyer de suite la liste des Officiers, qui ont  
 “fui, et je demanderai leur destitution immédiate. Ceux qui ont  
 “abandonné leurs armes passeront en cour martiale, la liste sera  
 “envoyée à trois heures au quartier général.” General Robin’s  
 Division was the 2nd of the 23rd Corps, Army of the North. At  
 no time, I believe, during the campaign was any German body of  
 troops known officially by the point of the compass from or towards  
 which it was operating; invariably by its number, the name of its  
 Commander, or its state or province. General Faidherbe may be  
 better qualified than most of his comrades to sing in a chorus in  
 “Norma,” but he is by no means fit to take the rôle of Hotspur in  
 the first part of King Henry IV.

## CHAPTER XVI.

BOTH ARMIES WITHDRAW—THE FRENCH TO FORMER  
SHELTER—THE GERMAN TO THE LINE OF THE SOMME—  
EXCEPT DETACHMENTS SENT OUT TO FEEL THE ENEMY—  
BOMBARDMENT AND CAPITULATION OF PÉRONNE

NEXT morning, turning out soon after five, the battalion assembled with outposts at the junction of the road to Bancourt and partly retracing our yesterday's steps, joined the 3rd Battalion and the batteries at Rocquigny. There a report was brought, but not believed, by two Hussars, that the French were moving round the left to relieve Péronne. Passing with sheep's eyes the luxurious quarters and flesh-pots of the Duc de Rohan to Nurlu, where the detachment was "dislocated" into villages east of Péronne, the regimental and battalion head-quarters with a battery arrived about 3 p.m. at Marquais, the Prince and the Brigadier lying at Roisel. I was utterly done up at the end of this march, and yet I don't remember seeing many men fall out.

The arrangements, in conformity to which Prince Albrecht's detachment thus retreated, prescribed the new line to be held by the 8th Corps and troops attached, as, with the left flank secured by Amiens, to be the course of the Somme as far as Péronne, up to which point the higher part of that river runs pretty nearly south to north. From the fortress the line was prolonged by the swampy valley of the brook Cologne, which runs from east to west. The right flank may be considered in the air<sup>1</sup>, as indeed it was up to the engagement at Bapaume, but now

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<sup>1</sup> St. Quentin not being defensible.

it was to be somewhat nearer its supports, the fortified posts of Ham and La Fère. In order to remove the source of weakness in the centre of this line, Lieutenant General von Barnekow was directed to prosecute the bombardment of the little fortress with vigour as long as the security of the investing troops would allow. Simultaneously with the movement on the right, the 3rd Cavalry Division, with a small support of Infantry, was directed on Albert and neighbourhood, forming a strong outpost in front of the left. To the columns of the 15th Division, were assigned as points to march on, the crossings of the Somme at Feuillères, Frise, and Cappy, thence to move into cantonments, the right of which came as near to those of the 16th as the villages of Flaucourt and Barleux.

All three Commanders had directions to leave, during their retreat, some squadrons to observe the movements of the enemy, who, it was known, had shewn signs of evacuating his position the previous evening. One of these *réconnoissances*, composed of a squadron of the 8th Cuirassiers from the cavalry division, came in the morning on a French rear-guard and took the opportunity of charging and riding down a Chasseur Battalion. Accounts from the other side do say that the footmen held their ground and made the horsemen pay for their daring.

From this, the day following on what may be considered as the third attempt of the French North Army to make its way to the relief of besieged Paris, till the time at which General von Goeben was able to see clearly through the plan by which his adversary hoped to carry out the fourth and last attempt, the German covering force in this quarter stood, taken as a whole, pretty stationary along the line just indicated. At the same time interior movements took place almost daily, which necessitated at one time by the call at particular spots for mixed detachments of less than brigade strength, at another by the desirability to restore the larger organization when such detachments became numerous, sometimes perhaps by the desire to give to different troops their

respectively equal share of hard work. Then, according as the movements of the enemy were felt or reported, was there more of a concentration near one point of the line, or did more forward undertakings beyond it occur. Thus the 3rd Cavalry Division stood eventually as far north as Mailly and Beaucourt; the 15th between Albert and Bray on the Somme; the 16th had extended at last its left wing as far west as Chaulnes; and the infantry of the Reserve Division,<sup>1</sup> which, during the latter part of the siege of Péronne, had stood in the neighbourhood of Combles and Sailly, was afterwards cantoned in that of Harbonnières; the Reserve Artillery had been called up to Courcellette and Pozières, north-east of Albert, and later sent back to the quarter of Dompierre-Bequincourt, at which last place, head-quarters of the Army Corps were established till the 13th. I cannot pretend to give an account of all the various movements within the chain of outposts, however much I have been interested in studying them—calculated as they are to teach lessons of organization as well as strategy—nor of the different encounters that took place when feeling further for the French.

With regard to the organization of the force, the mixed detachment, under Prince Albrecht the younger, was immediately broken up. The artillery and infantry returned to the 16th Division, and the brigade of cavalry of the Guard had to look after the right flank east of Roisel, on the Cologne, and to maintain communication with Count Lippe's Saxons at St. Quentin; but I do not know much that is accurate about the deeds of these horsemen. The Reserve Division formed part of General von Barnekow's command till the capitulation of Péronne, after which the infantry brigade was, I believe, attached to the 15th Division, the cavalry remaining with the 16th. The 3rd Cavalry Division was from time to time more or less reinforced by artillery and infantry. The foot and riding detachments of the Reserve Artillery were re-formed. Some battalions of Landwehr attached to the department,

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<sup>1</sup> Hitherto known as General von Senden's Detachment.

termed "Etappen Inspection," which was charged with keeping up communication with Germany, arrived gradually and occupied permanent posts in rear.

The 5th of January was a halt for the 40th, and at head-quarters of the 2nd Battalion, the afternoon was devoted to the meeting of the committee of accounts, which is formed of the Major, the senior Captain present, and the Paymaster. Next morning the battalion head-quarters with two companies and a battery, relieving a detachment of the 19th Regiment, moved to le Mesnil, a small village about two miles from the southern front of Péronne, and close to the inundation formed by a lock at the point where the Cologne brook joins the Somme, at the south-west angle of the little fortress. This inundation is hardly more than a wet ditch between the south-east end of the long wall and the village of Flamicourt, from which a road leads to Mesnil, but extends for about a mile-and-a-half up the Somme canal, with a breadth sufficient to cover that long front which has little defence of its own, but possesses, in addition to the water protection in front, the advantage of being flanked by a horn-work close to the aforesaid lock. All the time from this day (6th) till the capitulation, the water was frozen, but the ice varied in strength from day to day. One night it held so strong that a Subaltern patrol was able to cross far enough to come under fire of the horn-work. The day we arrived at Mesnil, a battery was playing on the town from the heights between Biaches and Flaucourt, which rise just west of the horn-work.

I thought of going across to see the working of the battery, but was induced to postpone my design for that day on finding that I should have to go round by Brie, in order to find a passage across the Somme, and afterwards observing that the operation had little of the character of what used to be a regular siege, but was merely an almost unanswered bombardment, I preferred contenting myself with watching the outposts, and remained with troops ready, at any moment, to take the field if the move-

ments of the North Army had forced the raising of the siege.<sup>1</sup>

The detachment at Meuilly had a post in front, on the Frazzicourt road or path, to keep up communication with another furnished by the 2nd Battalion from Doingt, and placed at the edge of the widest part of the inundation; also another half-left nearer the Somme. It was a clear afternoon and a good view was to be had, but next day there was a thick fog, followed by thaw and heavy rain. Rosen, who had already been round to inspect the horn-work, which I should have mentioned is west of the Somme, was sent for by the Captain of the battery to a consultation at brigade head-quarters at Doingt. I believe the feasibility of taking the work by storm was discussed, but pronounced against. Late in the afternoon a sunken battery for two 6-prs. was constructed

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<sup>1</sup> Since commencing my narrative, I have had the advantage of reading Surgeon-Major Mouat's Lecture at the United Service Institution, in April, 1871, on "A visit to some of the battle-fields and ambulances of the north of France," published in No. 64 of the Journal. While sharing the doctor's dislike to a bombardment as a military operation, as I trust my text shows, I must demur to the parallel he has drawn between the capture of this fortress by the English troops in 1815, and that by the Prussians this year. I think Dr. Mouat looks on and applies the contrast between the "inferior weapons of the former time" and the "means and appliances of modern warfare," supposed to affect the conduct of the Commanders on either occasion, in hardly the right light. Imperfection or shortness of range of a fire-arm constantly in former days made it advisable for a General to bring his men to close quarters with an enemy as soon as possible; while in this case, length of range and rapidity of firing rendered the storming a fortification, defended by troops armed with chassepôt rifles, a different operation from what it was in 1815; also, the artillery of that period did not give a Commander the option of keeping his men in comparative security at a distance, while an effect could be worked on a fortress thus bombarded. Anyhow a parallel as to conduct, does not lie between the Duke of Wellington and General von Goeben, for not until the day after Péronne capitulated did the latter assume command of the 1st German Army. Moreover, this particular bombardment was only one of several, for which the responsibility rests with the chief Commander of the German forces. I am much obliged, however, to Surgeon-Major Mouat for drawing attention to the former taking of Péronne, as I had fallen into the same mistake with General Faidherbe, and was giving her the title of virgin, as he does up to the time of her last capitulation, that of "Urbs nescia vinci."



some way in front of Mesnil, to play on the work across the inundation, but the arming of it was countermanded. Sinister reports were flying about as to the enemy's assembling again at Bapaume, and the contingency of having to abandon the siege was talked of.

Early on the 8th, the report was that Faidherbe's troops were moving round west of us. Snow and frost returned. In the afternoon I went down to the picquet of the 2nd Battalion, whence, it having cleared, I got a good view of the long front and the flanking work, on the latter of which, only three men, apparently Officers, were to be seen. The roof of the church seemed nearly gone. I then crossed by the circular route which the reliefs used in order to avoid Flamicourt, believed to be occupied by the garrison, to Doingt, in front of which stood a battery ready to receive any possible sortie from the former village. The report about the French being at Bapaume was contradicted. About midnight I accompanied a patrol of 40 men under a Subaltern, sent to feel into, or through Flamicourt. The furthest picquet was warned to be ready to support us by fire, on the horn-work or otherwise, if we were discovered, and then cautiously entering the village, we were surprised to find it unoccupied. The inhabitants, as some of them told me after the capitulation, were in the cellars and heard us. We kept as quiet as possible in order to avoid drawing down the fire of the afore-mentioned salient, than which we were now nearer to the town wall, but the men were so excited and astonished at finding themselves so close to the place, which from Mesnil they had not been able to see, that it was hard to keep them from talking. However, we alarmed no one but the dogs, made out clearly, it being moonlight, that there was communication between the town and the village, and we withdrew unobserved by the garrison. The bombardment was going on from the western heights, but the fortress did not seem to answer. It struck me that a few days previously, when the ice was more to be trusted, if the fire of the horn-work

could have been kept down, the long wall might have easily been escaladed. On the 9th the report was, that what part of the enemy had been moving towards Péronne, had now withdrawn to Cambrai; also, that an envoy had been sent to the little fortress, to give her till noon to surrender; otherwise the bombardment, which had ceased, to recommence. About 3 p.m. I went with Rosen to the 2nd Battalion outpost in front. There the Non-Commissioned Officer reported having seen a column march along the left bank of the Somme into the town.<sup>1</sup> All seemed wonderfully quiet. On return to Mesnil, Rosen sent information pushed to Doingt, and later received orders to cease all undertakings against the enemy, but to maintain the utmost watchfulness.

Next morning the detachment was roused at seven with orders to be in readiness to march, the French North Army being reported to have pushed forward as far as Sailly. A day or two previously, a reconnaissance pushed from Acheux by Colonel von Pestel, whose detachment had returned close to the cavalry division, had ascertained that there was no enemy west of Arras, and that it seemed he had moved on Vitry and Cambrai.<sup>2</sup> The 16th Division was therefore enjoined to have a careful look-out eastward of that fortress. A detachment out in the north, under Colonel von Wittich, was ordered to push forward with reinforcements to Fins, thence to feel for the enemy's whereabouts. It was notified that agreeably to the last night's convention, the garrison at Péronne would at noon march out with honours along the Paris road (left bank of Somme), and lay down its arms at Eterpigny.

With regard to the defence made by this garrison, and the abuse lavished on the Commandant by General

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<sup>1</sup> This, I fancy, was a detachment sent to occupy the horn-work in earnest of the capitulation, which was concluded at eleven that night.

<sup>2</sup> A misfortune befel my friends of the 7th Lancers; one of their patrols, when baiting in the village of Mouchy aux Bois, was fallen upon by the inhabitants and previously-concealed Franks-tireurs, whereby 2 Officers and 31 men were made prisoners.

Faidherbe for surrendering, perhaps as bitter as that bestowed on the Prussians for bombarding the place, it strikes me that it would have been better for that Commander's reputation, if he had taken as much trouble, after his *soi-disant* victory of the 3rd at Bapaume, to push forward to the relief of his subordinate as he afterwards devoted to prove the latter's blameworthiness, for not continuing more than a week to wait in vain for help, which a day's march ought to have brought from a victorious comrade. It is a matter for consideration also, whether it did not behove the French General, when he advanced on Amiens from La Fère in December, as a measure of precaution to cause all the non-combatant inhabitants of Péronne to leave the place; or, at any rate, when he resolved on retiring from the Somme at Christmas, to send such an order, knowing as he must have done, that as long as he left the fortress to be an unsupported outpost, it would, sooner or later, be attacked. If he had adopted such a measure, he might have had a smaller force in his way at St. Quentin soon after.

About noon I went down to see the occupation of the fortress. On the way to Flamicourt I could see artillery and infantry drawn up on the height above the left bank of the Somme, to receive the garrison. Into the village were flocking such of the inhabitants as had fled, and an old woman showed me a way across the ice to the east gate, where, by squeezing through the palissades, I caught the rear of the 2-40th marching in. The horn-work and lock were, of course, my first object of study. The uses of both I have mentioned. The semi-circle round the north is protected by a bastioned system which had suffered little. I hardly know whether this poor little place or Thionville struck me as presenting the more pitiful spectacle. I did not stay long for fear the 1-40th might meanwhile march off, so returned to Mesnil through Flamicourt, where I got some fresh vegetables to buy.

Next day the orders were for two companies to remain at Mesnil and two at Doingt. Four Officers of the regiment rejoined from sick-leave, one giving us the news

that at Amiens there was great joy on the 3rd, at the reported success of the French North Army; also that in consequence of an alarm from the north-west, an expedition had been sent to Abbeville. General von Manteuffel having been summoned south, had handed over command of the 1st Army to General von Goeben, who, however, still retained that of the 8th Army Corps. In the afternoon I drove with Rosen round by Doingt into Péronne, which was beginning to improve, that is to say, the ruins to be cleared away, and the shops were opening. We had a look, amongst other things, at the old castle, about which I felt an interest I could not account for until I recollected Le Balafre and Quentin Durward. In the church much of the roof was gone, and the stained glass windows much smashed. An expert, however, who was in the building at the time, said that enough of the roof remained to allow of its being repaired. Just as we were going out, there was a piteous sight. A wretchedly poor-looking family brought in a new born child, which did not look as if it could live many hours, and which a young priest baptised as quickly as he could. I met afterwards Capt. Uniacke and, I think, Dr. Leslie of the English ambulance, just arrived with necessaries for the sick and wounded. On returning to Mesnil, we were visited by a most amusing old Pole, who came in with the foraging Officer from a village not very far off, to which a requisition party had been sent. He told us he had been an Officer in the National Army of what had been his country, but that since 1830 he had lived in France; and he described in a German, the accent and manner of which I wish I could convey an idea of, his delight at meeting some Polish Hussars, who had come to his village. "Ah! How we did drink! (Germ Saufen). And "then they kissed me all round, and after that they "wanted to kiss my wife; but I said, 'Kiss me as much "as you like, but leave my wife alone.' Now, do you "want any good wine? Send to the castle of—(mentioning a nobleman), I wish I could go and show where "the best is, but I dare not. Don't you send any "Officer; he must be a connoisseur, and tell him not "to take the clean looking bottles, but to feel in the

"sides of the walls for dusty old ones. Ach der Spitz-bube!"<sup>1</sup> No opportunity, however, occurred for testing the value of this information, for on the 13th we marched to Boucly, keeping one company with headquarters, the other three being distributed amongst the villages of Tincourt, Marquais, and Roisel, along the Cologne brook. The same day the 3rd Battalion of the 40th, which immediately after the retreat from Bapaume had been sent to garrison and prepare for defence the castle of Ham, was formed with two squadrons from the Reserve Cavalry Brigade and two guns into a flying column, with directions to march on Fins, thence to attempt pushes forward on Bapaume and Cambrai. It should have been mentioned that on the 11th, Colonel Wittich found French Infantry in possession of Bapaume, and as far south therefrom as the village of Ligny. On that day, too, a squadron of the 5th Lancers was dislodged from Sapignies, and during the hasty retreat the horses of 12 men slipped and came down, their riders thus falling into captivity. Of course the incident was made much of by French reporters, official and non-official. As a precaution, the bridges over the Somme at Hem and Feuillères were prepared for destruction, none to be left between Péronne and Cappy. On the 12th, Colonel von Wittich had another look at the enemy in Bapaume and its neighbourhood, as also some shots at him. General Faidherbe says that he was there, but did not hear the shots; also that his people made the Colonel retire quicker than he came.

About this time General von der Groeben had in support of his division, and on the right bank of the Somme, General Memerty's Brigade<sup>2</sup> with two extra battalions and four batteries, all from the 1st Army Corps. To this detachment, of which the head-quarters stood at Querrieux, was attached, on the 11th, the bulk of the 7th Lancers under Colonel von Pestel. On the 13th, these latter occupied Albert, and pushing a reconnaissance towards Bapaume, came under the enemy's fire at Pozières, suffering a loss in wounded of five men and six horses,

<sup>1</sup> Rogue.

<sup>2</sup> The same which garrisoned Amiens during the march into Normandy, and formed part of the Reserve in the action of the Hallue.

On the extreme right, a detachment, sent by Count Lippe to reconnoitre towards Cambrai, came on a few Mobile Guards at Le Catelet.

Our quarters were now in the château of a Viscount, who was at home, but did not appear. In it were also quartered the Commandant and some Officers of the 3rd Reserve Hussars, who were doing patrol work to the north-east. This regiment was one composed of Landwehr men and raised in Posen. With the 1st Reserve Dragoons it formed the cavalry brigade under Major General von Strantz. The Commander was a Major of Cavalry of the Line, but the rest of the Officers, including the Adjutant, were country or other gentlemen, who had merely served in the Line the time necessary to qualify. They were nearly all Poles—*as indeed were all their men*—and most amusing companions. In fact, the three days we spent at the château were a pleasant and luxurious change from the wretched quarter at Mesnil, where the proprietor, on retreating into Péronne, had not had the civility to leave blankets and sheets for possible visitors. Still I believe that I was the only one of the whole party who was not heartily tired of the whole business and anxious to be at home again. "Would you not like to be a French General?" said to me at breakfast one morning, the wittiest of the Poles, and continued, "I know I should, for I should at once constitute myself a prisoner, and get sent to Germany." Although the staff were tolerably quiet, the different squadrons were hard at work, and during the night orderlies were perpetually coming and going with reports and orders. On the evening of the 14th, one Officer came in, after having missed the column he was attached to and been pursued by French Cavalry, supposed to be Gendarmes, with news that Le Catelet on the Cambrai—St. Quentin road—was occupied by 600 *Francs-tireurs*. A detachment of the Hussars was to start next morning at 5.30 for Fins, and having been offered a horse I agreed to accompany them. However, at 4.30, Steinöcker, who had gone to Péronne for orders, returned with directions for the battalion to assemble at Tincourt, and with two guns to reconnoitre towards Bapaume; ac-

cordingly I stuck to my old friends. The reports were that Albert was in the hands of the French, and that Count von der Groeben had retired; also that Le Catelet had been evacuated by the enemy. After sending off the baggage, including the men's packs, to another Catelet in rear, we turned out in intense cold, and the battalion, having formed, had just thrown out an advanced guard on the road to Longavesnes, when the Colonel of the Regiment rode up and countermanded the movement, informing us that it appeared the villages towards Bapaume were unoccupied. We managed, therefore, to spend the rest of the cold day in the comfortable château. At dinner-time a Captain with his squadron returned from a patrol and asked where fighting had been going on, he having heard artillery fire in the direction of the road from Le Catelet to St. Quentin.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FRUSTRATION OF FAIDHERBE'S ATTEMPT TO PASS ROUND GOEBEN'S RIGHT—BEAUTIFUL BATTLE OF ST. QUENTIN— PURSUIT TOWARDS CAMBRAI.

ON the morning of the 16th, during our return to the wretched village of Mesnil, a balloon was in view crossing our line at some distance from south-west to north-east. I believe it fell within the French lines, and I have often wondered if it carried instructions from Paris to the North Army as to how a diversion might be made in our quarter, simultaneously with a sortie from the city.

Two companies went on to Brie, while the baggage and packs were sent across the Somme; but next day the battalion formed early, and with the 6th Heavy Battery, marched back to Boucly, with orders to support or cover at the crossing of the Cologne brook, a reconnaissance being made by Colonel von Reinike, with the 1-40th and, I think, two battalions of the 29th Regiment, besides some of the Reserve Cavalry and guns.

As we approached the southern wall of the château park, through which the drive leads to a small bridge over the brook, we could hear enough to know that firing was going on close on the other side, and that what the detachment might have to do was to cover a re-crossing. The ground was favourable enough for infantry to hold, and I daresay it would have been very prettily defended if it had suited the enemy to force a passage, but there was no position whence the battery could play to much advantage. While the question was being discussed, I closed with an offer I had been playing with for a few days, and became owner of a handsome chesnut or fox, as the Germans call a horse



of that colour, till then belonging to the Captain of the battery. The Brigadier presently coming up, I rode with him through the park, and across to where Colonel von Reinike was superintending the retreat of his detachment. This was done very quietly, the French showing some small bodies of infantry in the woods about Templeux-la-Fosse, but neither pressing hard on the crossing nor molesting our subsequent flank march through the villages of Cartigny and Catelet,<sup>1</sup> on the high grounds near which we formed front to north-east, before definitely filing off on to the road from Péronne to Ham. Possibly this may have encouraged the enemy to believe that we were about to cross the Somme, there flowing about south to north, and that his movement round our right would be little molested. Not knowing myself at the time the plans of either Commander, in fact nothing more than that all the baggage had gone over, I expected we should follow. On reaching the above-mentioned road, however, the order came for all that there was of the 16th Division to march at once to Ham. That town we reached at 5 p.m., and the battalion staff found quarters with the Mayor of the suburb of St. Sulpice. Seeing me wash my hands in the kitchen, the Lady Mayoress was rather indignant at my afterwards presenting myself in the dining-room, and strongly pressed on me the propriety of retiring to the servants' hall.

We were a good deal anxious as to what had become of the 3rd Battalion, but at the time knew no more than that it had withdrawn from Le Catelet on the advance of the French against St. Quentin. It seems that the detachment commanded by Major von Holleben reached Vermand about midnight on the 16th, after a long march across roads much flooded by the thawed snow. Communication during the night was established with the Saxons. About 10 a.m., on the 17th, firing was heard in the direction of Roisel and Péronne. A patrol sent to enquire how Colonel von Reinike's reconnaissance was getting on, returned from Boucly

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<sup>1</sup> Not to be mistaken for Le Catelet or Chatelet, between Cambrai and St. Quentin.

with the report that the Reserve Hussars were drawn up to cover the retreat of that detachment. About 3 p.m., a quarter-squadron of the 9th Hussars brought an order from the Brigadier, despatched from Mesnil at 1.30, directing the Major to leave the squadron of Dragoons, and with infantry and guns to march by Caulaincourt, Beauvais, and Vaux, if possible as far as Roupy, and there to show a front towards St. Quentin. From as early as 2 p.m., the flocking into Vermand of men in blouses, without arms it is true, but with a queer look about them, seemed to betoken that the day would not pass quietly. Ten minutes after receipt of the order were the battalion and the two guns assembled, but hardly was the column clear of the small town on the road to Caulaincourt, than bullets came dropping from the direction of Pouilly, and four dragoons, who had just patrolled through that village, reported that they had been fired on as they came out. At the same time the Major received a laconic order from the General of the Division, dated without place, 17-1-71., 3 p.m., and reading: "Division proceeds to Ham, as enemy advanced by Roisel, Detachment Holleben to come on to Ham; guard left flank; let Saxons know; frequently report in the direction of Ham." While the squadron was hastily sent for out of Vermand, a company extended and the guns unlimbered against Pouilly, at a distance of about 1,100 paces.

Presently some cavalry, who from their white cloaks were taken to be Chasseurs d' Afrique,<sup>1</sup> appeared from Soyecourt; part withdrew from observation, while part dismounted and fired on the column, hitting three men and a horse of an ammunition waggon. The detachment then withdrew across country to Caulaincourt, covered by its own dragoons and a company skirmishing. Having north of that place to show a front to the enemy's cavalry, the battalion lost a fusilier, too severely wounded to carry off, and before reaching Beauvais, the advanced guard reported more cavalry

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<sup>1</sup> No cavalry of this particular class being mentioned in French accounts as forming part of the Army of the North, I suppose they were Dragoons.

moving slowly in the direction of Vaux. As it was then getting dark, the country unknown, and the guide hardly to be depended on, the Major thought it advisable to make for the nearest crossing of the Somme at Béthencourt (occupied by a company of the 70th Regiment), and continue his march along the left bank. Reaching Rouy le grand (near Nesle), at 9.30, he found his people too done up to try and get on to Ham, so turned in for the night at the former place. He was able to report that the cavalry from Soyécourt was followed by a strong column of infantry; also that he had communicated by Aubigny with the Saxons, who had evacuated Roupy the previous evening. Besides a loss by the detachment of 1 severely and 6 slightly wounded, 16 Dragoons on patrol duty were that night missing. The battalion rejoined the brigade next day. The total loss of the regiment in these two affairs came to: 2 men killed, 10 wounded, and 2 missing.

Both reconnaissances were of value, as combined with the information gained by General von der Groeben's troops at Albert the same morning, placing beyond doubt that the bulk of the French Army was marching to turn the German right. On the 14th General Faidherbe had advanced to Albert, whence the two squadrons of the 7th Lancers retired on the infantry at Querrieux. On the 15th the latter reconnoitred again towards Albert without result, while the French are said to have done the same at Bray, Hailly, and Bouzincourt. That day their Commander seems to have resolved on movement, and on the following, which was quiet for the German left flank, managed to steal away as far as Combles and Sailly. Early on the 17th the whole of Count von der Groeben's troops were on the march to Albert, when the advanced guard discovered that the place had been evacuated. Memerty's detachment then at once took the road to Péronne and came that night to Cléry-sur-Somme, while the cavalry division marched to Combles. The 15th Division was also set in motion and moved along the line as far as Villers-Carbonnel and Marché-le-Pot. On the 16th the Saxon Cavalry Division of Count Lippe was driven out of St. Quentin by French troops from

Cambrai, with the loss of some horses<sup>1</sup>, and retired on Ham. La Fère became immediately afterwards their base.

Turning out about eight on the 18th, I found it an unpleasant trudge through the sea of mud in the streets of Ham to the battery with which I had left my horse. It was sometime before the column formed and advanced (the 31st Brigade leading). I stayed on the road for breakfast in a village, and managed to liquor-up some of my friends as they passed, then overtook the head of the column north-east of Jussy, just before reaching which, the division, having gained ground enough to the south-east, changed direction so as to advance on St. Quentin from the south. From the village distant artillery fire was to be heard away to the left, and about half a mile to the front a battalion of the 19th or 29th Regiment was engaged in constructing barricades across and on both sides of the road; also a battery was being placed. I rode on to the railway station of Montescourt, meeting the 9th Hussars falling back, who had been under fire and lost a man. On the line their last files pointed out where they said the enemy's tirailleurs were to be seen, but even with my glass I could make nothing out. At the barricades, to which I returned, were Generals von Barnekow and Strantz, watching with great anxiety. After a while the Division Commander moved a few battalions forward, and advanced cautiously with the cavalry and a battery on the right to Montescourt. From that station, as before, nothing was to be seen of the enemy; so, presently, orders for quartering the troops for the night were issued, and I rode back

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<sup>1</sup> Not to take much notice of the French accounts, which assert that prisoners were left by the Saxons, to the number, according to the Préfet of the north, of 130 men, according to General Faidherbe, (Note J.) of 40 men, I have to point out that the latter, wishing, no doubt, to detract from the strategical talent of the adversary, who out-maneuvred him, states at page 62 of his pamphlet, that General von Goeben, on learning the recapture of St. Quentin by Colonel Isnard on the 15th, exaggerated the importance of this fact . . . he commenced his movement towards the east, even before knowing that of the French in that direction. I trust that the statements in my text will prove a sufficient answer.

to Jussy, in the south-western end of which I found the 1-40th billeted. That night orders were received from General von Goeben, whose head-quarters were now at Ham, directing the movements of the two wings of his army on St. Quentin next day. Before summarising these directions, the operations on the left and in the centre must be given. Count von der Groeben had orders to make for Vermand on the 18th, with his cavalry and General von Memerty's detachment, thereafter to report to General von Kummer, entrusted with the command of the left wing. The latter's division was instructed to cross the Somme, and march by Tertry on Etreillers. A reserve, composed of the Guard cavalry and some of the infantry of the 3rd Reserve Division, was moved from the neighbourhood of Nesle to Ham, there to take direct orders from the Commander-in-Chief. The 3rd Cavalry Division and Memerty's Detachment concentrated at Péronne, and commenced their advance, headed by an advanced guard of the 7th Lancers, three battalions and a battery, under Colonel von Pestel, between 9 and 10 a.m. The rest of the cavalry moved in echelon on the left rear. As about noon the head of the column reached Cartigny, heavy artillery fire was heard from the south-east. That was caused by the 15th Division, engaged with the enemy at Tertry, and presently the Count received orders to incline to the right till his troops should touch the nearest brigade. Pouilly was found occupied by artillery as well as infantry, and for its capture, accomplished about 4 p.m., both these arms were brought into play, while cavalry moved round its north side, as also that of Soyécourt, equally held by the enemy. The latter village, though bombarded until it was set on fire in places, could not be carried that night, and little progress was made beyond Pouilly, a determined stand being made by the French on the west side of Vermand. A number of prisoners, some 700, and a gun, said to have stuck in a village pond, fell into the Prussians' hands. General von Memerty was wounded, and Colonel von Pestel lost a horse. Of the fight of the 15th Division, beginning, I believe, at

Tertry, I have no details; but the left wing of the army remained that night on the line Pouilly—Beauvois. The enemy had evacuated Vermand by morning.

The army-orders that night told off the Reserve Artillery to the left wing, and directed the latter to advance on St. Quentin by Vermand and Etreillers, the cavalry, if possible, to gain possession of the Cambrai road. Count Lippe, Commander of the Saxon Cavalry Division, had the duty of working along the La Fère road, and of extending his right as far to the north as practicable. The 16th Brigade was expected to arrive in the morning at the junction station of Tergnier, from the 4th Army Corps before Paris, and was destined to reinforce his infantry, which consisted of only a battalion of Jägers.

Early on the morning of the 19th, as the division<sup>1</sup> commenced its march with the 31st Brigade leading, along the road to Essigny-le-Grand, my first duty was, in case of accidents, to pay for the horse I had bought. This was done by writing a cheque on the back of a leaf taken out of one of the railway account-books at the Montescourt station. Then getting forward as promptly as I could to the head of the column, I came at about 10.30 a.m. on the General of Division, halted with his staff at a point where the road cuts through a ridge, descends easily into a valley, and then ascends to a plateau opposite. This ridge rises between the villages of Grugis and Gauchy, from a swampy valley through which runs a canal, crosses the railway, the roads from Essigny and La Fère, and, further east, widens into a sort of table land, which is to some extent wooded. The opposite plateau rises from the same valley, and its southern edge runs pretty nearly parallel to the ridge. Down the slopes of both run cross-ridges, with hollows between, hardly so

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<sup>1</sup> This division was not complete on this occasion. In the 32nd Brigade, the 70th Regiment had only 6 companies instead of 12 present, and I am not sure that the 31st was not a mixed body. Anyhow, General von Barnekow had only 8 instead of 12 battalions of his own division; but the 3rd Reserve Division attached, made the right wing up to 13 battalions, 16 squadrons, and 7 batteries.

steeply formed as to be termed ravines. The valley between the two, opens into that of the canal, and at one part of the former is a row of poplars, with, if I recollect rightly, some hedgework between them. The southern fall of the ridge is not abrupt enough to give secure cover against projectiles with much curve in their trajectories, and I think the plateau opposite possesses some command. A fine view was to be had to front and half-left, but somewhat circumscribed on the right by woods and villages. The town of St. Quentin was to be seen, the cathedral being at first the attractive object, soon to yield in interest, however, to a windmill on the plateau, called Tous-les-Vents. Against that, General von Barnekow was directing the placing of a 6-pounder battery on the right of the road. I could distinguish no warlike signs on the opposite heights, nor did any answer come to the first shots directed against the windmill. I believe that the advanced guard of the 9th Hussars had made out the enemy to be there. About simultaneously, however, with the first shots from the ridge, firing was to be heard from the left rear. This was caused by the 32nd Brigade at Essigny-le-Grand receiving fire from the left, and the battery attacked answering with a few rounds. Presently a shell-fire opened from about the village of Castres to the left, and raked the ground partly covered by the ridge where I expected to see the column of infantry deploy. As soon as the head marched up, it changed direction to the left, and the 31st Brigade crossed the railway, and proceeded to the attack of Castres, as also at the same time, or soon after, to that of Grugis. According to a French account<sup>1</sup> the two villages were occupied by the 2nd Division of the 22nd Corps. At the former, I believe, no great stand was made, but more troops were required to carry the latter.

As the 32nd Brigade came up, the Captain of the 6-pounder Battery attached was told by General von Barnekow he might choose his position, so led it up to the ridge in line with and a little to the right of the first established

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from copy of extract from *Progrès du Nord* in Brussels *Nord*,

guns. I had gone back a little way, as the four battalions advanced in the usual "attack columns," that of the 70th taking ground to the right some way in rear of the ridge, the 3 of the 40th approaching it, the 1st and 2nd on the right, the 3rd on the left of the road, and returned, riding in front of the 1st about half a-dozen paces apart from the Adjutant. Rosen had ridden on a short way. All three of us had been discussing in the morning the chances of the French waiting to receive the attack, now that a stop had been put to their march south, and great doubts had been expressed of a fight taking place. If these had not been dispelled by the flank fire, they presently were by a lot of shells coming at last from the windmill, one of them fell between Steinöcker and myself, covering us with mud, but not exploding. Another burst among the 3rd Battalion, and I am not sure but that it was at this early stage of the action that Major von Holleben fell mortally wounded. The 1st and 3rd took post close under the ridge, while the 2nd was ordered a short way to the rear as a reserve. I am not quite sure how the two 4-pounder batteries were at first disposed of, but I think one accompanied the 31st Brigade, and the other was probably kept in reserve for awhile. I then ascended to the two batteries, on which was coming a shell-fire more rapid than I could remember since the afternoon near Vionville, and more accurate, it seemed, than on any former occasion. Wishing to save my horse I dismounted, but like most of his hot colour, he was so fidgety that I could not at the same time hold him and use my glass. All hands at the guns were working with that steadiness and carefulness of every shot, which always pleased me so much to see amongst the Prussian Artillery. Moving just clear of their right, I could now see the enemy in some force on the opposite height and slopes, with skirmishers pushed forward to the cross ridges on our side of the valley. According to the account last quoted, as also comparing General Faidherbe's, it seems that the 1st Division of the 22nd Corps held the ground from the Canal to La Neuville, or even as far as Mesnil-St.-Laurent. On either side of the windmill the 1st Battery was successively re-inforced



by four others. Some of the guns were 12-pounders, and worked by sailors, whose practice was generally considered, by their opponents, more effective than that of the Line at the commencement of the war. Amongst some trees, a little to the right front of the two Prussian Batteries, were about half-a-dozen men of the 70th, sent forward, I suppose, to be ready to warn the battalion, standing a short way to the right rear, in case a rush was made on the batteries. They were getting some *chassepôt* fire from the cross-ridges, and one of them, somewhat in liquor, informed me loudly that he did not like being there. The Non-Commissioned Officer also looked very bewildered, and as if he would have been glad to come away, but I suppose they had to stay for some time. It was unpleasant work for the infantry on this part of the field, whether standing in reserve or skirmishing, for the shell-fire, as may be supposed, was heavy about the former, while the latter had few of those points of cover to rush on, the occupation of which sometimes compensated a little for the shorter range of weapon. The ground, too, was so soft that the men sank well over their ankles. After riding about a little to the right front, so as to keep out of the line of fire, I returned to where the Brigade Staff and the battalion—five companies—of the 70th were standing. An English-speaking Captain of that regiment had hardly exchanged a few words with me, when he was ordered forward with his company to occupy a line of trees, at the edge of what I have called the table-land, several hundred yards in front of the line on which the batteries stood. Shortly afterwards the battalion moved forward in half-battalion columns, I think, and passing by the left of the trees, descended into the valley diagonally towards the cross-ridges, west of the Essigny road, in order, apparently, to dislodge thence the French skirmishers. The 1-40th was now the only battalion in reserve on the right of the Essigny road. The other two battalions of the regiment were about this time (soon after noon), brought into action on the left, the second being directed as re-inforcement to the 31st Brigade against Grugis. The 11 squadrons attached to the right wing seemed to be principally

at work patrolling towards the Saxons on the far right. Of these nothing could be seen beyond the smoke of their battery in action, I should say, about north-east of Itancourt. Transportable wounded were being sent along the La Fère road. I rode forward again to see how the advance of the 70th was getting on, and half-way from the trees met the English-speaking Captain helped back, very badly hit. Some skirmishers commenced to descend the opposite slope from the French left of Tous-les-Vents, and their fire somewhat unsteadied the men under the trees, but a Field Officer of the regiment, with his Adjutant, rode up and set them right. Going to the edge of the descent, left of the trees, I could see that the little columns had driven the enemy's skirmishers from the cross-ridge and had themselves disappeared on the other side. I had now a capital view down into the valley, almost to that of the canal, and could make out a strong French column descending from the opposite height near the railway and apparently advancing on Grugis. Now would have been the time for a battery to have driven up to the spot where I was, and shelled this mass, which presented a beautiful mark with every advantage of ground, and took about a quarter of an hour to defile. However, the opportunity was lost, and a Captain of artillery, who came to my point of observation after the enemy's column had got under cover of the cross ridges, was of opinion that a battery brought so close to the heavier ordnance opposite would have run too great a chance of being speedily dismounted. The attention of the holders of the wind-mill position must now have been drawn to the trees, for some shells came in amongst them, and one man must have been hit by a splinter, though I imagine not severely, for he roared most lustily. Along the nearest cross-ridge French skirmishers now ascended, driving back the Prussians, who rallied higher up and then drove their antagonists down again, and in this way an infantry fight swayed backwards and forwards. About this time also I could see smoke north, or north by west, of St. Quentin, and was in great hopes that the Cambrai road had been gained.

What information I have obtained regarding the left

wing, tells me that its advance, about 8 a.m., was preceded by a *réconnaissance* composed of four squadrons (from 5th and 7th Lancers), with a riding battery. They seem to have made a number of prisoners before reaching Holnon, where the troops first came under fire. I should mention that from what I could observe in a morning's walk some weeks afterwards, the ground west of St. Quentin seemed more level, more wooded, and covered with more villages than that on which the right wing had to operate. According to the authorities already quoted, the 23rd French Corps, with the brigade of Colonel Isnard, which had taken St. Quentin on the 16th, occupied an arc, the left extremity of which rested on the canal at Rocourt, and the right near the Cambrai road at Fayet. A brigade of Mobile Guards, established at Bellicourt on that road, was the saving of the French North Army. Lieutenant General von Kummer had under his command: First of all his own division, all but complete, 13 battalions, 4 batteries, and 3 squadrons, with 7 batteries of the Reserve Artillery—but had to send back therefrom 3 battalions and 4 batteries to replace on the Ham road, the reserve which the Commander-in-Chief had found necessary to despatch in support of the right wing,—then the troops led by Count Groeben, 8 battalions, 15 squadrons, and 4 batteries. This force had to repulse some offensive movements of the enemy, and then succeeded in driving him back from Holnon and the adjoining woods, capturing a gun and about 2,000 prisoners. I have no detailed episodes of this part of the action to relate, except as regards the extreme left. The four squadrons, which had on starting formed the advanced guard, inclined to the left from Holnon, and passing through Fresnoy, advanced towards Gricourt, which they found occupied by French Infantry. The 5th Lancers then moved against Bellenglise to observe the Cambrai road. From Gricourt the 7th soon saw the brigade marching down from Bellicourt, and to disturb its advance moved to a height near Pontruet, sending at the same time to the nearest Brigadier, Count Dohna, to ask for guns. These did not come; but as the enemy attacked Pontruet, the arrival of infantry, ten companies

strong, I believe, helped to check him, and at last he was played upon by batteries standing further south. Still at dark he continued to hold Bellenglise.

All this time I rather think that the hardest fighting was taking place in the right centre between the railway and the canal, where the 31st Brigade, after obtaining possession of Castres, was pushing on towards St. Quentin. What at commencement had been the reserve—three battalions and two batteries—were sent to support this brigade, but I am not quite sure at what hour. About 1 p.m., that drawn from the 15th Division was also directed to the centre. From the part of the field where I was riding about I could not see more of the struggle in that quarter, than the descent from the plateau of the heavy column I have mentioned. Probably it was composed of the troops described in an account I have from the 2-40th, as forcing two of its companies to retire from the Grugy sugar factory. This battalion was ordered, about 1.30, to support the 31st Brigade, and was directed by the Brigadier, Colonel von Rosenzweig,<sup>1</sup> to attack the sugar factory and adjacent railway embankment. The position was carried in the usual fashion by two companies, one extended altogether, the other keeping a "Zug" ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) in support, fixing swords and making a rush as they came to about 100 paces from their object; while the other two companies of the Battalion remained in reserve, holding a ravine by the railway and pouring thence a fire on the enemy, when the skirmishers, to save themselves being cut off by approaching masses, had to retire, in doing which they were able to carry off their wounded. The 3rd Battalion was, I believe, sharing in the fight, which I have described as swaying to and fro on the slopes and cross-ridges.

After watching that for a little while, noting also that the fire of chassépôts was coming heavily on the men of the 70th, under the trees, and wondering why more sign was not made by the Saxons<sup>2</sup> on the far

<sup>1</sup> Count Gneisenau was away sick.

<sup>2</sup> I did not know at the time that Count Lippe had no more infantry with him than a battalion of Jägers from his own corps, and one of the 86th Regiment, which arrived during the fight, from before Paris.

right, I rode some way to the rear, and met General von Barnekow with his staff, coming from the centre. A light battery was, about the same time, brought to the right and placed so as to play on the artillery by the windmill, and, I think, also on the infantry menacing the detachment of the 70th. Colonel Hildebrandt seemed somewhat apprehensive of having his two batteries on the ridge disabled, but the General would not hear of their being moved. He and the staff moved quietly backwards and forwards on what I have called the table-land, receiving every now and then reports, which I should have liked to read before they were filed by the chief of the staff. I remember a request coming from some one, I rather think from the Saxon Commander, asking for a battalion. "He shall not have it," was the gruff old gentleman's reply.

Attention was presently drawn to a column of infantry on the cross-ridge, between the Essigny road and the railway, and, as regards the front of the division, within the line we were at the time standing on. Though glasses were abundant, not one of the party (a dozen or so) seemed able to make out whether they were friend or foe, and in which direction they were firing. To me they had the appearance of a very irregular double column faced outwards and firing to either flank. A couple of Hussars sent towards them failed to bring back a reliable account at first, and it was some time before they were made out to be French. Anyhow, I fancy that even if they had been known from the first, it would have been dangerous to direct the fire of the battery near us on them for fear of shelling Prussians in the valley of the canal beyond. Barnekow with his staff rode quietly towards his left, and about this time received a message from the Commander-in-Chief, the purport of which I did not catch. As we passed in rear of the two batteries, which had held their exposed position now for over four hours, a Subaltern of one of them (the 6th 6-pounder) was badly wounded. Every few minutes there came about us a curious sort of shot, with a noise like a flock of sparrows flying quickly past. I don't exactly know what the projectiles were like, but they came from

one or more mountain pieces, which the enemy had brought forward to one of the cross-ridges. Soon after passing to west of the Essigny road, the General ordered up the Reserve Cavalry, who had been for some time past standing in the right rear, their Brigadier, General von Strantz, as also Colonel von Wittich, riding with His Excellency. The Dragoons came up first and trotted past in very pretty order, the officers saluting. The Hussars followed, but were ordered to remain in reserve under the ridge, while the Divisional Commander told the Dragoons to cross the same, and charge towards the enemies' batteries. I drew a long breath, for I feared a repetition of part of the afternoon scenes on the Spichenen, and at Gravelotte, and the squadrons were very weak. They ascended the ridge in column, but close to the top, by some blunder, a wrong signal was sounded, and the rear squadron went about, coming down the ridge in some disorder,—for all this was going on under some amount of fire. I was horrified at first, but presently reassured by seeing them got together again, and the three squadrons dash over the brow. I could not resist the inclination to gallop after them, and on clearing the ridge was well rewarded by the splendid sight before me. The slope down into the valley was here easy and unbroken by ravines, but the opposite ascent somewhat steeper. A few hundred yards in front were the dragoons in full career, just on the point of wheeling round short of the trees and hedge, from which came rifle fire kept up by the few French who made any stand; otherwise the lower part of the slope on this side, and the whole face of the opposite, were covered with fugitives in utter disorder, making for Tous-les-Vents, the batteries near which had now ceased working. In a few minutes, and before the dragoons had returned after their wheel, two columns of infantry, which I had not noticed, but which must have been lying down at some distance on either side of me, pushed forward in pursuit, and on my looking round to the left rear, were to be seen from three to six battalions advancing along the valley on the other side of the railway. The former, I pre-

sume, consisted of parts of the 3-40th and 70th, the latter of the Reserve, commanded, I believe, by Prince Albrecht the younger. I don't remember ever witnessing a sight so distinctly representing victory. I hardly think the Dragoons sabred many men in their charge; it was the moral effect of their sudden appearance and dash forward that was so beautiful. Whether General Faidherbe, when alluding to a charge of a regiment of Hussars, means this, the only cavalry attack I know of having taken place from the Prussian right wing, I am not quite sure; but although he declares that the charge was in a little time arrested and broken, he mentions immediately afterwards that a brigade in that quarter had to retire, and that its movement carried the left with it; also that the batteries were in their turn compelled to retire. His account, therefore, fortifies the opinion I formed at the time, and which has not been shaken by any Prussian Officers with whom I have discussed the point, that the appearance of these 120 gentlemen, farmers and artisans, headed by only two "regular" Officers, gave the signal for the French left wing, with the exception of the troops holding to cover in the canal valley, and of the men who made a stand at the hedge, to break into utter flight.<sup>1</sup> Of course I dispute the General's assertion that the batteries fired till the last moment to protect the retreat, for I well remember that not a shell came from the neighbourhood of the windmill after the charge had taken place.

The Dragoons having now returned, a battery was wanted and sent for, but did not arrive for some time. As I went back again over the ridge, some bullets still came across, one of which slightly hurt

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<sup>1</sup> I was so delighted with this performance that, as the Dragoons rode back, I could not forbear from lowering my bonnet to them, for which mark of admiration the Lieut.-Colonel thanked me. He told me also their strength at the time; also that he and his Major were the only line officers. The Adjutant, with whom I made acquaintance, when at home was a banker. The Commanding Officer further informed me that, during the autumn manoeuvres a year or two before, an English Officer would not believe but that this, the 1st Reserve Dragoons, was a line regiment until he accompanied it to its place of formation and saw disbanded the Landwehr men of whom it was composed.

The turn out was, of course, early next morning. Missing the 1st Battalion, I followed the 3rd of the 40th and some of the 9th Hussars to another square, where the thoroughfare was blocked by some 3000 prisoners being marched off, I fancy, to La Fère. All uniforms seemed represented amongst them. At last I got out on the Bohain road, eager for news as to whether the 3rd Cavalry Division had got far enough round to the north, and if we were to hope for a chase to the Belgian frontier, but could get no information from anyone I asked. There was some delay in getting the column formed; a pontoon train seemed desirous of acting as advanced guard, and battalions were tramping backwards and forwards, in the more than ankle-deep mud, before they could find their places. Old Barnekow was distributing bits of his mind here and there. I extricated myself from the jam, and got on to the advanced guard, which I found composed of the Reserve Cavalry Brigade, and one of infantry, with a battery from, I think, the 1st Corps. While the Dragoons took the road to Bohain, the Hussars, whom I accompanied, diverged to the left by cross roads, passing Sequehaut, Montbrehain, and Brancourt, to Premont. It was an unfavourable morning for a pursuit; the roads were covered with half-melted snow and slush, and a thick fog prevented—except when from time to time a gust of wind caused a clearing—a view being had to any distance. As each village was approached, the feelers and Non-Commissioned Officers' parties first rode round it, after which the squadrons dashed through at a sharp trot. A few prisoners were picked up. On issuing from the north-west side of Premont, the advanced files came under fire of infantry, moving in straggling fashion along one of those Roman roads so common in that part of France, which must have been constructed with more care than some railway lines. It looked as if they had a support behind them in the village of Serain, and as if there were more in the woods to the right. The leading squadron halted, or rather drew back a little, till the rest of the regiment came up; then an advance was again made,



but fresh fire was received, which necessitated a retreat under cover of Premont, while patrols were sent out right and left; as also a report to the following battalions of the advanced guard. If a riding battery had accompanied the Hussars, this stoppage need not have taken place, but there were none with the right wing. After we had waited for a couple of hours, about simultaneously with the approach of the infantry came information by the patrols that Serain was unoccupied, as also communicating Dragoons from the right flank. The advance was then resumed; a waggon laden with cases of English preserved beef was found abandoned; the Roman road was followed for some distance north-east, and then we branched off to the left, through Clary and Montigny. Approaching, just as it got dark, the railway embankment south of Caudry-le-Coquelet, we received some shots, which again brought us to a halt. It was not over pleasant work waiting in the cold for another couple of hours, while the infantry came up and arrangements were made for the night. Still the singing and humour of the men—I particularly remember that of a battalion of the 41st Regiment—was very cheering. The Hussars were billeted in Ligny, the Officers, whom Count Feil invited me to join, being comfortably quartered with the Mayor, by about 10.30 p.m.

I believe that the left wing marched this day in two columns, and that the advanced guard of the 3rd Cavalry Division, after picking up *en route* more stragglers and trophies than were found on the right, came at evening under the fire of Cambrai, and was established for the night at Rumilly.

Soon after daylight on the 21st, the advanced guard of the right-centre—I believe the Saxon Cavalry, formed a column on the extreme right—assembled on the same ground north of Montigny, on which it had broken off the night before. While we were waiting for the order to advance, it was announced that an early patrol, cautiously approaching Caudry, had found it occupied by a Prussian sanitary detachment which had made its way there during the night.

The Dragoons led this morning, but more closely followed by infantry. As soon as Caudry was passed a halt took place, and patrols were sent in all directions, some coming also from the columns on the right and left. I went into a public-house to get my horse fed and some breakfast, during which, on my nationality being discovered, many workmen crowded round me, anxious to know what prospects there were of peace. They had not much to say about the conduct of the war, indulged in few of the frothy declarations of patriotism ever on the lips of certain classes of Frenchmen, but showed great anxiety that traffic should soon be re-opened, for they were mostly spinners and weavers, and wanted cotton. On one of them though the law of conquest had pressed hard, for as he had incautiously displayed on his feet during the passage through of the troops, a new pair of boots, these had been "required" of him by a soldier, whose own had worn out.

I rode along the great road from Cateau-Cambresis to Cambrai, through Beauvois, where was halted the bulk of the advanced guard, to the point where a squadron of Dragoons was posted about half-way towards the fortress. It was a tolerably clear day, but I could not make out anything of the place. The warriors were very amusing. A Lieutenant told me that on the evening of the 19th, he had eaten Faidherbe's dinner and drunk his two bottles of champagne; but then he was a funny fellow. As no manœuvring was going on beyond sending and receiving patrols, quoth the Captain, "Watchmaster (Troop-Sergeant-Major) I think there is a battery concealed in that village; take a couple of troopers and capture it." They ride hence and return. "Sir Riding-Master (Captain of cavalry) I have brought in six guns."—producing that number of bottles—"Distribute the ammunition." A handy man then improvised a flute and played a waltz, to which couples of these middle-aged riders went frolicking round.

Finding that nothing more was coming off in this quarter, and that the troops of the advanced guard were being quartered in the villages about, I rode

back in search of the 40th, and was directed by a Field Officer I met, to the region in which I should find the 32nd Brigade. At Caudry I met the cavalry of the Guard trotting through, and afterwards General von Barnekow with the Prince. General von Goeben was expected. At Ligny I found the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 40th, and was gratified by the smiles with which the men greeted me, as well as by the congratulations of the Officers, for they had accounted me as missing.

On the 22nd we had an unpleasant march back to Montbrehain, meeting baggage of regiments, trains, and cart-loads of stragglers from the infantry of the advanced guard, all of which combined with a thaw, made progress difficult. We were not sorry, however, that evening, to get our own baggage back, after an absence of five days. The men's packs, it will be remembered, had been sent with it across the Somme on the 17th.

On this day a demonstration by Count von der Groeben's troops took place before Cambrai on the chance of the fortress surrendering. Voigt was the Staff Officer sent to summons the place, and was led blindfolded from the suburb to the Governor, who seemed too excited to write, but dictated a reply that he would defend the fortress till the last, adding the taunt that only barbarians fired on women and children, in reply to which Voigt asked him to remember Saarbrücken. As he left the place and passed through the suburb, it struck him that the townspeople were anxious for a surrender.

As it, however, did not enter into General von Goeben's plan for covering the siege of Paris, to undertake that of fortresses beyond the line which his troops could conveniently occupy, the town was spared a bombardment and the force withdrew.

## CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION OF CAMPAIGN — THOUGHTS ON LESSONS  
TAUGHT AS TO INFANTRY TACTICS — CARRIAGE OF  
SOLDIERS' KITS—UNIFORM—AND ON ENCOURAGEMENT AS  
WELL AS EDUCATION OF OFFICERS.

THUS ended the last active operation of the War in the North of France. The 1st German Army had succeeded in its primary object, that of preventing the French North Army from co-operating with the sorties of that blockaded in Paris, but had failed in the secondary aim, that of cutting off the enemy's retreat, and thereafter breaking up his organization or driving him on to neutral territory. The movements during the last few days had interested me nearly as much as the defence of the German frontier at the commencement of the war, and the last fought battle formed a brilliant ending to the performances of those whom I had learned to know as friends. I hope that the details I have been enabled to furnish, and the incidents I have described, will enable critics to judge of the manœuvring on either side, my own opinion being that the movements of the French showed as much indecision on the part of their Commander, or as little unity of purpose between director and executor of their plan<sup>1</sup>, as had been displayed at former stages of the war. Why, if the purpose was to gain the country east of La Fère, as the direction of columns across the Oise on the 18th must lead one to suppose was the case, was that day wasted?

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<sup>1</sup> Assuming, as has been stated, that General Faidherbe was directed by higher authority to make an attempt, of which he doubted the expediency.

The troops had enjoyed a ten days' rest under cover of the quadrilateral and a halt at Albert; having lain the night east of the meridian of Tertry, they had a start in the morning of at least 8 miles over the 15th Division, which had to cross the Somme, of nearly 10 over Memerty's Detachment, and of from 12 to 15 over the Cavalry Division, which latter, instead of being able to tease the tail of a French Division as early as 8 a.m., according to General Faidherbe's pamphlet, did not start its advanced guard from Péronne till between nine and ten. Only the 16th and Reserve Divisions with the Saxon Cavalry could have reached the Oise before him. Or, if the General's plan, as would appear from his own account and from his keeping a brigade at Bellicourt to hold the Cambrai road, was merely to fight the Prussians, and at the same time preserve a line of retreat on the northern fortresses, might he not have made a better attempt to dispose of Groeben and Kummer on the 18th, instead of waiting till Barnekow concentrated with them on the 19th? Lastly, are the reasons alleged for being, after what had passed on the 18th, obliged to accept battle round St. Quentin instead of retreating northwards, to be counted valid?

In order to dispel the idea that the battle of St. Quentin was of much material aid to the Army of Paris in its attempted sortie that day, I have to state that only one brigade (16th) was despatched from the German investing army to the 1st Army in Picardy, and with the view of correcting the possible belief that the French on this occasion yielded only to the overwhelming superiority caused by reinforcements continuing to arrive by railway, I beg to assure my readers on good authority that beyond one battalion of the just-mentioned brigade, no further troops arrived in time to share in the action.

The total strength then of the Germans I believe to have been 39 battalions = (at an average of 750 bayonets) 30,000; 54 squadrons (assuming that Count Lippe had his division of six regiments complete, which I do not know to be the case) = say 6,500,

and 25 batteries = 3,500 ; at the outside, therefore, 40,000 men with 150 guns.

If I understand General Faidherbe aright, he had, exclusive of the brigade on the Cambrai road, nearly the same number of men, although he was inferior in number of guns.

I do not know the exact number of prisoners taken ; it has been stated variously as 7,000 and as 10,000.

The German losses came roundly to 70 Officers and 2,500 men. The particular items that I have learnt are :—40th Regiment, killed, 1 Officer and 19 men ; wounded, 5 Officers and 121 men, missing 9 men ; 6 companies of 70th Regiment, killed, 2 Officers and 39 men, wounded, 6 Officers and 208 men, missing, 6 men ; 1st Reserve Dragoons, 2 men killed and 6 wounded, with a total loss of 30 horses ; Artillery Detachment of 16th Division (four batteries), killed, 2 Officers, 7 men, and 57 horses ; wounded, 3 Officers, 60 men, and 16 horses. From these 24 guns were fired 1,322 rounds of shell and 2 of grape. The 2-40th expended 2,725 rounds.

Of my own personal friends, Major von Holleben, who had several times commanded the regiment, died of his wounds a few days after the action, his wife arriving, I believe, a few hours too late to see him alive. The Officer killed was Lieutenant Hermens, of the company which I had first learnt to know at Saarbrücken, and one of my patrolling friends, Captain Neydecker, received a shot across the face which cost him the loss of one eye, the other, too, having a narrow escape. The Colour Non-Commissioned-Officer, who had enlivened us by his playing after the long march on New Year's Day, I saw some days later in St. Quentin gradually sinking under the effects of a shell splinter which had struck him as the battalion stood in reserve.

The position, to which that part of the 1st German Army which was devoted to watch the north retired, was the old one of the Somme, on the left bank of which the bulk of the troops were cantoned. Some

as far from the line of defence as the town of Beauvais. Various points on the right bank were, however, still occupied both before and after the armistice, such as Péronne, Ham, and St. Quentin on the right, and others North of Amiens which, as they were not scenes of any active operations, need not be specified in this narrative. Army and Corps head-quarters—General von Barnekow temporarily commanding the latter—were established at Amiens with the 3rd Reserve Division lying there and in the neighbourhood. The 15th, with head-quarters first at Eu, afterwards at Abbeville, prolonged the line to the coast, while the 16th and the 3rd Cavalry Divisions occupied the old ground between St. Quentin and Bray; the Reserve Artillery and Trains, different districts from time to time in rear of either Infantry Division. It was, of course, some time before the troops were thus distributed, and interior movements took place from time to time. The withdrawal of the force concentrated before Cambrai took place gradually, and with the precautions usual in a retreat, such as sending the baggage ahead; thus the rear guard did not commence its march till the 26th. Until the armistice commenced, the constant patrolling towards the enemy had to be kept up.

Having, at this time, need for a diplomatic or consular autograph, and being assured by the best authority that there was little prospect of more fighting in the north for some time to come, I was minded to make a trip to Versailles, and obtained a pass for the purpose. Other circumstances, however, prevented my starting until after the armistice was arranged, and then I did not care overmuch to join the crowd of quid-nuncs, who, I supposed, would flock thither. I found also that I could do my business at Rouen, so with the exception of a journey thither and back, I remained with my 40th friends until it was known that the preliminaries of peace had been signed.

Our march led, in three days, to the west of Péronne, where the 32nd Brigade was cantoned till the 30th

January. On the morning of that day we were roused early, the brigade having been ordered towards Bapaume, where a patrol had been fired on, and marched from our quarters at Framerville to Albert. Next morning we were formed before daylight for further march, when news arrived that the armistice had been accepted. On the 3rd February we crossed the Somme at Bray, where the bridges had been restored since the 30th, on which day the crossing at Cappy only, had been available. The positions for defence on that part of the river looked beautiful. On the 4th we marched to Ham, where, and in the neighbourhood of which, the 40th remained billeted till the 23rd, while the 70th, with brigade head-quarters, occupied St. Quentin.<sup>1</sup> Detachments of Landwehr seemed to take the garrison duty at all posts, which would continue to be occupied in the event of the line troops having to concentrate for further field service. Such a concentration was provisionally ordered on or about the 22nd, in view of the armistice expiring, and before news was received of the preliminaries of peace having been signed. The points then were, I believe, for the 15th Division—Abbeville, for the 16th by brigades, Bray and St. Quentin.

Stringent orders were issued for improving the time by brushing up and drilling, also, with the view of economising the resources of food still existing in the severely drained districts, putting an end to the independent requisitions, which it had been the rule for each regiment or detachment to levy in kind from the neighbourhood in which it might be temporarily quartered. The rules under which money contributions were exacted, I have not made it my business to inform myself of, but I know that the duty of enforcing them would have been gladly transferred by the Commanding Officers to the civil staff, if the latter had been strong enough for the duty. I may remark, however, with reference to those in kind, that during the time I was

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<sup>1</sup> I must not omit to mention that having occasion to visit St. Quentin before the troops had all withdrawn from Cambrai, I found the employés of the English ambulance, Colonel Berrington and Dr. Leslie, at work as usual.



with the Prussian troops, I heard of only two complaints that the principle, in accordance with which Officers and men claimed a liberal entertainment where they were quartered, or the means of the same from the district told off for their subsistence and no more, had been broken through, and then I believe the circumstances were reported to higher authority. I must add that the accused did not belong to the 40th Regiment.

Drilling I did not see much of, for my immediate friends were much broken up into detachments; but during one of my visits to St. Quentin, I observed part of the 70th Regiment looking as fresh and smart as if they had never left quarters. The anxiety to get home, and therefore the wish for peace, was strong amongst all ranks. One midnight, as Rosen and I drove through a village occupied by a battalion, on our way from Amiens to Ham, just about the expiration of the term of the first armistice, we were stopped by a sentry: "Are you fusiliers?" "Yes." "What company?" "1st battalion." "Is there peace yet?" "No." "Ach, Gott, Malheur!"

It seemed to me wonderful how pleasantly invaders and invaded, as a rule, got on together. I remember only one host at all sulky, and even he brought his wife and family in to dessert. In one village we were quartered twice in the same house; the second time we came the people welcomed us like old friends, and a few weeks afterwards, when, during a trip in the neighbourhood to say good-bye to friends, I met the landlord whom Rosen had gratified by sending a letter to the daughter in England, he pressed me hard to go and pass the night at his house. I have mentioned the hospitality I met with at Amiens. That continued whenever I visited that place, and I experienced the same warm-hearted treatment from a family at Ham, to whom also I was introduced by my German friends. When the head-quarter detachment of the 40th marched out towards Vermand on the 23rd February, after having been quartered in Ham over a fortnight, the people really seemed regretful. While stopping to water

the horses in a village between Amiens and Péronne, the two Artillery Officers I accompanied, and myself, were shewn by the damsels of the house the photographs of the different Lancers who had been quartered on them.

Outward and visible signs of distress were not nearly so numerous in the districts between Amiens and St. Quentin as I expected them to be after the events of the past three months. Excepting Péronne and the village of Foucaucourt (punished on the 14th December), I found nowhere marks of devastation. Even the southwestern suburb of St. Quentin was almost uninjured, and during three visits I paid to different parts of the battle-field, it was with trouble only, that I could find any marks of fighting. Of personal suffering or losses, I perhaps did not see or hear as much as I might have done. I certainly did not enquire after cases, and except that there were beggars in Amiens and Ham, relieved as in ordinary times, I remember no complaints of want of food. Forage had been exhausted in one or two places, and there were few farmers some of whose cattle had not been taken. At one village I remember a poor little child crying loudly, because its favourite cow was being walked off. Before the armistice had been renewed, ploughing and sowing had commenced in the fields, but I had only once an opportunity of enquiring whether there was enough grain-seed left, and that was during a walk I took alone over the ground the Prussian left wing had fought across on the 19th January. The labourers in the fields seemed to think they had lost valuable time, but not to be without hope, and this was before the news of coming help from England had reached them. I mentioned to some farmers in the village of Holnon, what I had heard about the charitable measures that were commencing, and one asked if I was an Englishman. On my answering "Yes," he burst into a guffaw, and shouted loudly the two monosyllables universally believed in France to form our national Shibboleth.

Of course I was much struck by the apathy of the people at the time of the elections for the National Assembly, but that fact has been commented on enough elsewhere. I do not pretend to understand much of French politics, and both during and since the war, I have been much puzzled in trying to make out what would have satisfied, and would now content the mass of the people; but during the operations in the north, I frequently could not help thinking that if the influence of central government could be got rid of, it would not have been difficult to obtain a plébiscite in these provinces in favour of a separate peace with Germany, and that the happiest lot that could befall the inhabitants, would have been their annexation to Belgium.

Such readers, however, as have thought it worth their while to read through my description of scenes, and to compare with the map the information I have been able to place before them, will, I hope, care more to know what ideas as to tactics the scenes I witnessed gave rise to in my mind, than with what speculations as to remodelling the map of Europe I amused myself from time to time. I have already stated that I have not been a scientific Officer; therefore I cannot pretend to publish opinions worth much consideration as to the employment of the branches of the service other than the one I myself belonged to. Probably, also, the fact of my having been present at the execution of fractional parts of such great operations as were carried on during the late war, if it has not disqualified me altogether from taking a general dispassionate view of the whole, does not put me on a level for the purpose of delivering judgment on the conception or carrying into effect of strategical plans, with those of my former brother Officers who have devoted more study than I have done to Military History. But as an Infantry Officer of some 18 years' standing, having been Adjutant in the field to a regiment which, though not the least distinguished of those employed in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, counted in its ranks from first to last of that campaign, a large proportion of partially-trained

men,<sup>1</sup> and having had the advantage during subsequent peace time of receiving some direct instruction from a General Officer, who never during his field-days ordered a movement without having a distinct plan in his head, and who was always ready to discuss with his subordinates the objects of different manœuvres and the advantages of various formations, I feel entitled to hope that any comparison I may succeed in making between the infantry tactics I saw practised by the late belligerents, and those I have known taught in our service, will be worth reading. And yet difficulties stand in the way of my forming a decided judgment as to what particular tactical formation or movement gave on each occasion the advantage to one side, and of my therefrom drawing a lesson for our use. First and foremost the state of the morale of either combatant; that of the French, both leaders and followers, having been throughout inferior; then the fact that the German Infantry fought with weapons inferior, but frequently with numbers superior to those of their enemy; whereas in the campaigns of our army these conditions have generally been, and are likely to continue, reversed. Thus, with regard to the tactics made use of, according to what I could observe or learn, by the French in some actions, and remembering the instructions issued to their soldiers at the outbreak of hostilities,<sup>2</sup> it was clear that their plan of acting at the commencement of an action tactically on the defensive, although the strategical aim for which the engagement was fought might have been offensive, gave them an advantage, especially whenever they had open glaxis-like ground in front of their position, as on parts of the Spicheren height and on the slopes by

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<sup>1</sup> Without being able to draw an exact parallel between the state of my own regiment, which at the time when it formed part of Havelock's column for the relief of Lucknow, besides the proportion of recruits, had all but 10 per company of its men uninstructed in the use of the Enfield Rifle put into our hands for the first time on passing through Calcutta, and that of a Prussian Battalion composed, to a great extent, of men under three years' service, and of men who had had time to forget part of what they had learnt, I submit that the pitch of training (I don't say efficiency) in each may be looked on as to a similar extent below the standard usually aimed at.

<sup>2</sup> Compare page 107.

Vionville, as on the plateâu occupied by their left wing at the battle of Gravelotte, as leading down from the ridge above the Hallue, and as swept by the fire of their left wing from Tous-les-Vents near St. Quentin; but that when the latter part of the instructions should have been carried out, when the enemy, weakened or disordered by the effects of superior fire from under cover, should have been charged, driven back or broken through, either the *coup d'œil militaire* was wanting amongst the chiefs, or the old élan failed amongst the troops; or that when the position was, under the circumstances, all but impregnable, the stamina required for enduring the hard fare and lodging accompanying prolonged defence, was absent. Therefore, although it struck me sometimes that the formation of French Infantry standing in battle array or advancing to attack, was less unlike that I had seen our own troops use during operations in India, or in the course of great field-days, than was that of the Germans, yet I have not thought any reason was thereby shewn for our altering the system we have hitherto followed, at least for purposes of defence. In order to make myself clearly understood, I must say, or repeat, that the French seemed to draw up their infantry, whether the battalions stood or marched deployed, or in columns or masses covered by skirmishers, more in continuous lines than did the Prussians, who more frequently left large gaps between their bodies of troops—Army Corps or companies—according as the nature of the ground or available strength dictated. Then, I cannot say that I was ever close enough to observe distinctly the interior movements of a French Battalion, so as to ascertain whether they had any dodges better adapted for getting quickly and with the least chance of confusion into position for defence or formation for attack, than were those of the Prussians, or than are our own.<sup>1</sup> So my further remarks and

<sup>1</sup> As a boy, when watching the drill of French Infantry on the Champ de Mars, I used to admire much the rapidity of some of their formations and wheelings on the principle lately introduced into our Field Exercise, which has been applied, however, only to formations, not to changes of front or direction, and afterwards was once pitched into for experimentalising with it on my own company.

comparisons must concern the two last only. I have already tried to describe the usual formation in which the Prussian Infantry advanced to attack. Their aim was in most cases, without bringing other than artillery fire at first to bear on the enemy, to rush forward and obtain possession of cover as near to him as possible, so as to give the short range needle-gun fair play. For this purpose, especially when the cover to be seized was a village, a wood, or such like, small bodies of from 150 to 500 men in columns, independent of each other, were perhaps the most handy. But for cases where no such cover is to be laid hold of, where fire from a distance has failed to produce the desired effect on an enemy, and where nothing is left for a Commander to do but direct an advance across the open, I cannot say that I have been at all induced to think that our formation in line two-deep with second line or reserve at a clear distance from the first must not, even notwithstanding the altered conditions of warfare, since we were last engaged against other than savages, be the most efficient. The question whether the line or column formation for attack is the more suitable, has long been vexed, and has generally been looked on by us with views differing from those with which foreign military men regard it; but until lately reading an article on tactics by a Prussian Officer,<sup>1</sup> I had no idea that when calculating which of the two methods of advance entailed the smaller chances of loss, any one considered that breadth of front offered to an enemy's projectiles better prospects than did depth of column or mass, but this part of the question might easily, if the thing has not already been done, be determined for our satisfaction on any rifle range, using, of course, the fire-arms of other nations as well as our own. As bearing on another part of the question I may instance that when riding

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the November number of the *Militärischen Blätter*. The author advocates the telling off of a Prussian company two-deep in four instead of three Zügen, and assumes that the "company-column," with decreased front, but with 8 or 16 ranks depth, according as the formation might be by Zügen or half-Zügen, instead of 6 or 12, would be less exposed to loss from shell or rifle fire of high trajectory.

over the scene of the Prussian right wing's operations at St. Quentin some days after the battle, with General von Barnekow and other Officers, I pointed out to one or two of the latter the suitableness, as I took it, of the ground east of the railway for an advance of infantry in line according to our fashion, and said that such a movement, simultaneously with the Dragoons' charge, had been the only thing wanting to complete my enjoyment of the scene on the afternoon of the 19th. The reply was to the effect that the risk of such a line giving way altogether, or in part, and being unwieldy to re-form, was too great. Without agreeing with the opinion of my respondent, that advancing in column-formation is less hazardous in the case where possible failure in a charge has to be taken into calculation, I cannot help thinking that we have something to learn from the Prussian method of forming their first line of attack in small separate bodies. I have never thought their columns rushing across the open, whether preceded by skirmishers or not, ever afforded a sight so well calculated to encourage one's own men, or to affect an enemy, as, I am certain, does a line steadily advancing with a mounted leader or two a short way in front, and it more than once struck me that extending all three Zügen at once from the column-formation, when under fire, was apt to form more than one line of skirmishers, and that then a few nervous, excited men, would fire from the rear. But I have no doubt that there must be an advantage in having a line of attack composed of so many joints, the halting, falling-back, excessive loss or disorder of one of which, need not necessarily affect the others, and any one of which can be relieved or reinforced so readily from second line; and I would suggest to our military authorities the question whether, considering that we have had no opportunity yet of trying the usual advance of a brigade or division, guided by a directing battalion, under the fire of modern weapons, our battalions when 800 or more bayonets strong, will not be too large and cumbersome as units in the operation. Reflection shows that the increased range of an enemy's firearms

necessitates a longer advance in fighting-formation, and increases the chances of disorder in the line before it arrives at charging distance; also, that the greatest determination, the largest possible exercise of influence of man over man will be required to get troops on against the rapid fire coming from a defensive position. Now I put it to any of our Commanding Officers to recall his experience of a cross-country field-day with blank cartridge; how long he had voice left to tell with effect on 400 men, who were all accustomed to hear his words of command almost daily for months or years past, and whether he would not feel himself at a disadvantage when leading into action his regiment completed to double strength by men who had, till within the last few weeks, never seen or heard him. True, that he would have two Majors, who, though their places, as well as his own, are prescribed by the drill-book to be in rear of the battalion, would, in case of an advance under fire, ride in front with him, each before his own wing—but I doubt either of these being able to act so efficiently as if he had a distinct portion of the battalion under his direct command: true that the recently introduced manœuvre of a battalion advancing in short échelon from the centre during the application of which to an action, Captains would not stay long in rear of their companies, gives to a line something of the elasticity, and to its component parts something of the independence, both of which are aimed at by the Prussians; but then I think these component parts are too small, and that our mode of practising the principle does not go far enough to teach each of them how to act independently in case of need.

In an attempt to make known my views on the reforms our military organization requires<sup>1</sup> I have expressed a wish, with regard to the administrative formation of a battalion, to see companies maintained at a higher strength than at present, and that when it is necessary to reduce a battalion from a service to a

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<sup>1</sup> "Army Regulation," published in, and reprinted from the "New Monthly Magazine."



home establishment, the number of companies should be decreased, rather than that the strength of these should be allowed to fall below 80 rank and file. For tactical purposes I have the same wish. Our Field Exercise prescribes the same movements for battalions of varying—provided even—number of companies, and the only change in any of its principles that I would advocate is in order to suit the front of companies exceeding 50 files, to substitute for wheeling (practised by the Prussians as well as ourselves),<sup>1</sup> changes of front and direction on the principle I have already alluded to.<sup>2</sup> But according as a battalion might be six, eight, or ten companies strong, with two or three Field Officers, I would cause a Lieutenant-Colonel to practise handing over, on field-days, a wing to his Major, or some of the outer companies to each, to be led independently throughout the movement representing attack of an enemy's position. So that recognition should be secured for, and all ranks be accustomed to, the principle of a Commanding Officer's using his discretion whether to lead the entire battalion as an unit, or to divide it according to the number of Field Officers. For instance, with ten companies, I cannot imagine any mode of advance over open ground more service-like than the four centre companies being led by the Colonel, with each three of the outer ones following under a Major, in *échelon*, on either flank. So much for cases where it may be necessary to advance steadily against a distinct object with the stern, determined feeling produced by moving shoulder to shoulder without firing a shot; then for those in which ground has to be gained more gradually, and perhaps tentatively, and consequently skirmishers have to be employed to feel for and fire on the enemy, I think we might borrow something from the Prussians without altering many of the principles on which we

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<sup>1</sup> Their *Zügen*, answering in battalion drill to our companies, do not exceed 40 files of two or three ranks.

<sup>2</sup> A modification would have to follow in the change of front or direction of a quarter-column, the present wheel of which rests on no sound mathematical principle.

manœuvre. An objection to their mode of advance by columns in first line, which I have not mentioned yet, is that they seemed to me more liable to get into disorder when passing over very rough ground, or through thick cover, than would be an English battalion advancing by fours from the flanks of companies in open column or line. Thus, although I could not see how the battalions of the 15th Division made their way forwards through the wood between Gravelotte and the opposite plateau, I have thought since that infantry could not have followed skirmishers in a formation better suited for preserving order and for readily deploying at the further edge of that thick cover, than is the one referred to above, which is described at Part III., sections 7, 19, and 20, of our Infantry Field Exercise. Now, as to skirmishing, I hope the accounts I have given have made it clear that the Prussians never extended such lines with the view merely of covering a formation, and then withdrawing them by closing, or assembly, when formed bodies advanced to attack; but rather that to their skirmishers was assigned the duty of advancing, firing or not, until close enough to the enemy for a charge or rush, when the bodies answering to our supports and reserves, also sometimes to our first line, would join the extended line, either reinforcing it generally, or moving up in closed formation to the points that most required aid. A manœuvre which I have seen practised on some of our field-days,<sup>1</sup> and much admired—that of gradually reinforcing skirmishers on the advance by supports and reserve until, at the supposed moment for a charge, the whole battalion had been thrown into the line which has gradually gained ground and is then about as strong as if regularly closed—resembles somewhat the Prussian plan of attack, but differs herein that all unity of command below that of the Lieutenant-Colonel is lost on the completion of the charge, and

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<sup>1</sup> I saw it first practised in 1859, with the 44th Regiment, by Colonel, now Major-General Sir C. Staveley, K.C.B.

that further use can hardly be made of the battalion without previous re-formation. This unity of command is much aimed at in the Prussian practice of skirmishing, though my narrative has given more than one instance of its having been lost in the course of a hard-contested action, and it is sought to employ, in covering a movement, picked shots, though it will have been gathered, from my account, that circumstances did not always allow of these alone being used for their more special purpose. Still their plan of forming the lines of skirmishers and supports from the Schützen-Zügen, with the remaining Zügen of each company as reserve to their own Schützen, might, I think, be imitated by us to some extent with advantage. For instance, why should not, after the completion of the annual musketry course, a section be formed in each company of the best shots and judges of distance, care being taken that both qualifications are present in every file? Then on all occasions other than of ceremonial parade, let such a section form one of the flanks of each company, and calculation will show that if, from a battalion of any strength or number of companies, the first or fourth section of each be thrown out, half extended at the normal intervals of six paces, half in support, the skirmishers thus formed will always cover, and more or less slightly overlap the front of the whole battalion when in line. Supposing that such a modification of our method of skirmishing were adopted, and that a first line of infantry were on the advance across broken, enclosed, or covered country, by the flank march of fours covered in the way just suggested, could Commanding Officers have their battalions better in hand for all the eventualities possible on closing with an enemy: that of simply having to form line, into which the skirmishers would run; that of reinforcing the latter for attack or defence; that of directing companies, double companies, or wings, to positions of security, either permanently or temporarily, to rejoin presently the advance, or that of quickly changing direction or front — and

could play be better secured for *coup d'œil* and judgment by Commanding Officers and their Majors? Many Officers, as well as myself, must remember how, during a long advance in line, on a brigade field-day, the point of direction has been continually altered, even in the directing battalion, so that a brigade has been found to have gradually wheeled with centre or flank on the arc of a right angle with the radius more or less short; so that one wing has been so jammed that it would have been impossible for men to fire without forming fours, and that in the other the consequence has been that harassing stepping-out, which takes so much more out of men than does an occasional steady double.

Now it is not to be expected that during one of the long advances under fire, now-a-days so common, a Brigadier or Colonel, if his brigade or battalion be in line, can halt and change front whenever it is evident that the direction must be altered. Therefore I submit that in all advances where the enemy's fire makes it inadvisable to keep the troops formed in columns, the application of the manœuvre I have picked out and suggested a modification of, should be the rule up to the point where the duty of the attacking force becomes clear. There would be no difficulty in making the half-section directing the skirmishers change direction, followed by its support and company in fours, no particular harassment and no confusion caused by the outer wing doubling, each company by the nearest way, and by those of the inner wing lying down or closing temporarily, then inclining to their proper distance in line or forming *échelons* in front. With the view of testing the superiority, or otherwise, of the firing of a line of skirmishers formed in this way, I would suggest manœuvring a brigade or battalion supplied with ball cartridges and covered at one time by skirmishers, consisting of entire companies extended; at another, by the best shots and judges of distance only, (the latter if not good shots, merely counselling and supplying with ammunition the former) afterwards comparing on

the targets the effect produced by each manœuvre.<sup>1</sup> Then the liability to loss attending on various attack-formations, should be tested by the same number of targets being placed at different times in line and columns of battalions, and in companies advancing by the flank march of fours.

The advisability of making some other experiments like the above, has been suggested by the frequent occasions on which the Prussian Infantry laid down their packs before entering into action, or when long marches were in view, either in pursuit or retreat, carriage for the kits was provided for otherwise than by the men. Much has been done of late years towards decreasing and adjusting in the most comfortable way the weight carried by the infantry soldier, but I doubt if the question whether or not he should carry a change of clothing, unnecessary at least for some time; whether or not he might not rather carry articles more conducive to preservation of health during a bivouac, or a larger supply of ammunition than hitherto, has been gone into. I do not mean to say that Prussian Officers generally agreed with me in thinking that the custom of a man's carrying his wardrobe on his back, except under extraordinary circumstances, should be abolished, and I have read in one of their magazines a statement that a man after once getting accustomed to the pack, is not tired out by carrying it, and when laying it off to fight, feels an additional exhilaration not shared in by him who has performed the march less laden. But I think that, in addition to obtaining medical opinions as to whether men's powers of endurance are impaired as their age increases by the frequency of working in "marching-order," experiments also might be made with advantage by comparing at the targets the performances of men firing after getting over a fixed distance in "marching-order"

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<sup>1</sup> Everything should of course be done to put the men into a condition somewhat analogous to that produced by a battle-field. The manœuvre should, therefore, be executed after a long march, and little time allowed for taking aim. When at Shorncliffe I often wished the brigade could be marched to Hythe, and skirmishing with ball cartridge practised on the shingle.

with packs on, and with packs thrown off on entering the supposed action; also after marching with, and remaining on them, a lighter equipment, consisting of, say, a waterproof blanket. About the necessity for a larger allowance of ammunition being carried than, formerly. I need not write.

Another little experience gained by me is, I think worth consideration in England, namely, that the German troops frequently could not distinguish bodies in their neighbourhood, whether they were friends or foes. This was often caused by waning light, but sometimes also by the fact that their Jäger battalions wear olive, and that the French Chasseurs-à-pied do not wear the red trousers which distinguish the line. In the English Line we possess, I believe, an advantage in the scarlet uniform, and that the advantage would be increased if the head-dress were the same in all regiments: and if now that measures are being taken to accustom our Reserve Forces to work with the regulars the dress of the Volunteers should be made the same—with few slight distinctions—as that of the Line, I feel very sure.<sup>1</sup> It may be remembered that at the commencement of the former's coming forward to enrol themselves for the defence of the country, it was considered that they would be most serviceable when trained as sharpshooters and clad in the most invisible colours. Now, leaving alone the question of training, what I saw made me think that the advantage to a Commander, of any degree, would be greater from having all his men or comrades clothed in the same distinguishable dress, than from having them wear doubtful uniforms, which yet might enable them to push forward to some extent unobserved.

The question of fortresses, where they should be placed how they should be attacked and defended when the lives of non-combatant inhabitants are consequently exposed, has given rise to much thought in

<sup>1</sup> I suggest nothing with regard to the Sikh and the Rifle Brigade from doubts as to old associations interfered with; but still a similar change may be advisable for them.

my mind; but I feel it to be too wide a question for me to discuss. I should only like to hear of some understanding being come to on the subject between nations by a convention like that of Geneva.

The last lesson which, I think, I have learned, is with regard to the constantly alleged superior efficiency of the Prussian Officers over our own, that it has been greatly exaggerated, and the cause misunderstood. Be it understood, however, that I leave the Staff of either army alone. But as regards the regimental Officers, the men best known to me, a former regimental Officer, I must say that I have met fewer glaringly inefficient men in the battalions and squadrons I became acquainted with in the late war, than I have known in our own service. That the average knowledge of the Prussian Officers I have met, however, general or professional, stands higher than that of our own, I feel disposed to dispute. At the same time it often struck me, that they were readier on occasions of emergency, to act according to their own judgment, and to apply the most suitable manœuvres to unforeseen circumstances, than might have been our own at the commencement of such a war. The cause of this, I believe, and have expressed my belief elsewhere to be, that the Prussian regimental system has not so depressing and machine-making an effect as has very often our own on all Officers, except those selected for the staff. A Captain, with them, has a position more important, with greater powers, and with greater responsibility than with us, and in addition to these inducements to acquire and keep up professional knowledge, I may mention as a deterrent from laziness, that I have never seen a Captain's company commanded for him by the Adjutant, nor heard of the latter Officer having to coach through his work, an incompetent Commander.

And yet our Officers, when properly treated, have, in peace time, far better and more numerous opportunities for acquiring the miscellaneous knowledge useful in war, than has any foreign Officer. What opportunities for training the eye for country, for

learning to find one's way readily by the map, for acquiring the habit of selecting position for troops to cover various communications, &c., are better than those constantly open to our sportsmen, not only in India, Africa, etc., but also at home? Why should not a Commanding Officer, when giving leave, long or short, for hunting or shooting, require on return a description of the country gone over, its capabilities for military operations in various ways, etc.? Officers would not grumble much at this being required of them, if an intelligent compliance gave them a *quasi* right to more leave. I could make many more suggestions on this point, but will only express my hope that the inordinate love for examinations, competitive or otherwise, will not exclude one of the best classes of regimental Officers we have had—men given to field sports.

Before leaving entirely the subject of lessons learnt, I should mention that during conversations I have had with Prussian Officers, though I know that there was some soreness on the subject of England's neutrality, that subject, except once, was never brought up in my presence, but that great interest and admiration was shown by many of them at the conduct and success of the Abyssinian Expedition to such an extent, that I may assure our taxpayers that—following language used the other night<sup>1</sup> by our Secretary of State for War—for the large sum of money spent on that enterprise, they got in esteem and prestige abroad, something like their money's worth.

I conclude my narrative by saying that, having left my Prussian friends at the end of February, I have seen many of them since their return to Rhineland, and have always been received as an old friend and comrade. The Officers of the 40th, in particular, did me the honour, on my leaving them, to petition their Sovereign for the grant to me of one of their marks of distinction, and General von Goeben was pleased to send me the medal for the campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> On the 22nd February, 1872, when moving the Army Estimates.



I must mention that when searching for information amongst the Officers of the 40th, particularly as regards casualties, I was given to understand that before being withdrawn from the north-west of France, the regiment had some skirmishes with the English colony at Dieppe, and that some difficulty was experienced in framing a return after one of these; whether it should be reported that two prisoners had been taken, or that two Officers had themselves been captured. It was decided to return the latter as missing.



## APPENDIX.

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SINCE the greater part of my narrative has been written, I have had the advantage of reading General Frossard's "Rapport sur les Opérations du 2nd Corps de l'Armée du Rhin," and must notice some places where his account, written in a sober style, compared with that of the despatch sent from Saarbrücken, differs from the statements or surmises made by me as to the movements of the French in Lorraine, which were founded to a great extent, on the brochure of an Officier de l'Armée du Rhin. While trying to compile a description of the Battle of Vionville, I have had the above "Rapport" in my possession.

Referring to page 37 of my text, I find that one of the three Cavalry Brigades was detached from the 2nd Corps to a Reserve Division; also that to each Infantry Division were attached throughout the Campaign, two or more squadrons of Chasseurs or Dragoons.

The General states that each Infantry Regiment numbered, on an average, not more than 1,350, but that their strength was from time to time increased by detachments of varying strengths arriving from the Reserves.

In comparison with pages 21 and 37, the 2nd Corps is reported to have reached St. Avold on the evening of the 18th, and its 2nd Division with a brigade of two Chasseur Regiments, to have advanced to Forbach. The Corps extended to the rear as far as Bening, the point where the railway from Metz branches off to Forbach and Saargemünd respectively.

Against pages 37, 84, and 97, read the effective state, on 2nd of August, as follows :—

2nd Corps ... ..	26,084	Men.	4,789	Horses.
3rd „ ... ..	39,153	„	7,913	„
4th „ ... ..	28,942	„	5,613	„
6th „ ... ..	35,414	„	5,843	„
Imperial Guard ... ..	21,949	„	6,635	„
2 Divisions of Reserve Cavalry	3,618	„	3,343	„
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Total ... ..	155,160		34,136	
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Against page 36, observe that on the 21st July, the position of Spicheren was occupied by a detachment, and afterwards by an entire brigade of the 2nd Division. At Saargemünd was established an Infantry Regiment with some Artillery from the 3rd Division.

From his report, General Frossard appears to have been more hampered in his movements by superior orders than my narrative has supposed him to have been. On the 24th July, General de Failly was authorised to support him on his right by a division or, in case of emergency, by two.

With pages 52, 56, 58, 68, &c., to 79, read : “On the 29th, the “Emperor, having arrived the previous evening at Metz, came to St. “Avold. . . . On his return to Metz, the following dispositions “were ordered, and the movements were executed during the morning “of the 31st.

“2nd Corps. Head-quarters advanced to Forbach. The 3rd “Division was established on the heights at Etingen, in second line “in rear of the brigade of the 2nd Division occupying Spicheren. “The 1st Division replaced the 3rd at Bening.”

Further : “The Emperor decided on effecting an offensive recon- “noissance against Saarbrücken, on driving the Prussians across the “Saar, on seizing the heights which command so much of the “town as lies on the left bank, so as to become master of the town “itself, in order to compel the enemy to show his presence and “plans. . . . On the 31st July, Marshal Bazaine, to whom

"had been given the superior direction of the operation to be executed, assembled Generals Frossard and de Failly, to arrange the concert which should be observed. It was decided that the 2nd Corps should advance on Saarbrücken; that at the same time General de Failly should make a demonstration in front of Saargemünd, and that a division of the 3rd Corps should appear on the Saar below Saarbrücken, near Wehrden.

"The same day, the Commander of the 2nd Corps . . . moved up his 1st Division to Forbach."

With regard to General Frossard's indignation at the charge of unnecessarily bombarding Saarbrücken, I have only to say that it appeared to me on the 2nd August, that the shots poured by the French Batteries and Riflemen on the New Bridge, and the part of St. Johann between that bridge and the railway station, were directed without any consideration for the intervening private houses, and that they continued after the last Prussians had retired from the bridge. There can be no doubt that whatever judgment be given on repetitions of such conduct during the war, the troops of the 2nd French Corps d'Armée were the first to fire on a retreating enemy, regardless of the damage they might do to private property and non-combatants.

As affecting pages 79 and 80, attention is begged to the fact that General Frossard reports having received the following despatches from the Emperor's head-quarters: "If you were to be attacked by superior forces, or if you should judge your position compromised, fall back on Forbach, where you should have accordingly four Divisions. This on the morning of the 4th, and later the same day. The Emperor desires me (Major General), expressly to tell you that in case we should have to do with Forces stronger than have been announced to us, he would direct you to fall back on St. Avold, and await there his orders, his intention being, without doubt, to call you back on him, if circumstances should point out that course. Your affair at Saarbrücken and the reconnaissances of the 4th Corps, which have been very close to Saarlouis, have, without doubt, determined the enemy to make on his side an offensive movement in order to protect the latter place. It would be a lucky thing if the enemy came and offered us battle with 40,000 men at a point where we could oppose to him 70,000 men, without counting your Corps."

The division of the 3rd Corps on which General Frossard was to count as a 4th, on which he might fall back, was presently withdrawn by Marshal Bazaine, towards St. Avold.

In answer to a telegram from General Frossard, describing his positions, and giving his opinion that the 2nd Corps would be better placed on the plateau between Saargemünd and Forbach, holding the latter place, the Major General telegraphed from Metz at 9.10 a.m., on the 5th August: "In answer to your telegram, the Emperor "decides that to-morrow morning you shall withdraw your head-quarters to Forbach, leaving you at liberty to dispose your Divisions "concentrating them round you, so as to withdraw your head-quarters "to St. Avold, as soon as the order to do so is given you by the "Emperor.

As regards page 79 of my narrative, it appears here that on the 5th of August, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Army Corps were placed under the direct orders of Marshal Bazaine, so that it may be well considered that much of the responsibility for the defeat on the 6th, should be added to the charges that may be brought against that Officer before the Court-Martial, before which I have read he is to appear.

In connection with pages 83-85, observe that on the evening of the 5th August, the 3rd Division was established in two lines on the Spicheren plateau, facing north, one battalion of the first line occupying the St. Arnual wood. The salient to the French left of that wood, was intrenched on the morning of the 6th, one of the works in particular, consisting of a horse-shoe-like trench, enveloping the projecting spur. The 2nd Division was placed two miles or so in rear of the 3rd, on the high plateau of Oetingen, watching on its right the ravine and road to Gross Blittersdorf, and on the left the valley in front of Forbach. The 1st Division was placed in the valley, with one brigade covering Stiring from the north, the other in position west of Forbach, facing the road coming from Saarlouis. Both positions were more or less fortified. General Frossard seems then to have considered his Corps rightly as Marshal Bazaine's advanced guard, but hardly explains why the advanced guard did so little, and why its superior Commander cared so little as to what came of it.

Comparing General Frossard's account of the action of the 6th, with my own, I find nothing to alter in the latter, except that if General Metman's division of the 3rd Corps, which it is acknowledged arrived about 9 p.m., near Forbach, is to be considered as having taken no share in the action, the comparison between the relative strengths of each combatant may be altered, but I believe that the French left was already falling back from Stiring and Forbach before the arrival of the advanced guard of the 14th Prussian Division. Anyhow, if General Frossard believed he saw 70,000 Germans against him, he must have worn even a more powerful magnifying glass than he had on the 2nd.

I must insist, however, on pointing out to readers of accounts from both sides, that the statement at page 41, of General Frossard's work with regard to the Spicheren Spur or salient to the effect that the Prussians were repulsed several times from these heights or crests (crêtes) by bayonet charges directed by Laveaucoupet himself (General of the 3rd French Division), and his Staff, is mere bombast. I believe I was able to watch the salient from the first attack till it was eventually carried, and to see that the Prussians, though they had more than once to fall back to the edge which separates the gentle slope above from the steeper descent below, invariably re-formed a few paces below and under shelter of that edge. Their finching was evidently caused by fire from the trenches, which I have described as a re-entering angle, and General Frossard's a horse-shoe, and no issuing of the French from these trenches was to be seen. An effective charge at any time when the Prussians finched would have driven them right down into the valley. I must also point out that the Spicheren salient was finally captured long before 5 p.m., and before the arrival of the 3rd Prussian Corps on the French right, as page 46 of the Rapport would have one believe. Much in the latter strengthens the remarks I have passed, on the miserable conduct of the 3rd French Corps that day.

As regards the notes of the French retreat at page 109 of my narrative, it should be observed that the brigade of the 5th Corps, which had held Saargemünd up to the 7th August, was then withdrawn by General Frossard, and accompanied the retreat of the 2nd Corps on Metz.

*22nd March, 1872.*







1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.







